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[“YOU WILL LIVE AND BE HAPPY, CELESTINE, AND REPAY ME FOR MY CARE OF YOU,” MRS. ROSLYN SAID, BRIGHTLY.]

MY LADY OF THE LAKE.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

FAR away in Australia, at the very moment that Guy Forrester was talking to May Dalkeith in the summer-house at St. Ormo, a very different scene was being enacted.

In a wretched hovel, which could scarcely be said to be furnished, so poor and scanty were the actual necessities of civilised existence, lay a young and still handsome woman upon a mattress in the corner, and she seemed to be quite alone.

Hour after hour she rested there, wearily tossing from side to side, and ever and anon stopping to listen. Suddenly a radiance overspread her features, and the sound of a light footstep came nearer and nearer, followed by a gentle tap at the door.

“Come in,” said the faint voice from the bed, and a lady entered.

“Is it safe for you to leave the door un-

fastened?” she asked, as she paused by the rickety deal table, and set down her basket.

“Quite, Mrs. Roslyn, thank you; there is nothing for anyone to steal here, my poverty is too well known,” she answered, with a sad smile.

“Well, I believe you are safe, Celestine; no one would be wicked enough surely to hurt a gentle creature like you.”

At her words the sick woman’s soft, dark eyes filled with tears, but they were her only reply to the remark of her visitor.

“And now,” she continued, walking to the girl’s side, and kneeling down upon the hard, uncovered floor, “let me look at you. Are you better to-day?”

“I don’t think I shall ever be that,” she answered. “And, what is more, I do not know that I should care to be, only I do not want to go on suffering, and hunger was such a hard death to die!” and the trembling lips told their own sad tale.

Mrs. Roslyn took her hand protectingly within her own.

“You are not going to die, Celestine,” she said, with a steady gaze of gentleness and

firmness in her voice. “You will live and be happy, I hope, and yet repay me for my care of you.”

“Oh! how I wish I could!” she returned, with brightening eyes. “You have been so very, very good to me!”

“Do you really think that, I wonder?” said Mrs. Roslyn, with a smile about the powerful lines around her singularly well-shaped mouth.

“Indeed, indeed, I do!”

She stooped and imprinted a kiss upon the forehead of the younger woman.

“Very well,” she said, brightly. “Now you are going to be obedient, and after awhile we will talk.”

Then she pressed the attenuated fingers, and, rising from her lowly position, she went over to the table; and unpacking her basket, she drew a box beside the bed, and covered it with a damask napkin. It was easy to see that it was not the first time which these impromptu arrangements had been made, for she quickly laid it out with silver, and glass, and plate, and knife and fork, as though it were a luncheon tray, and then she produced



the wing of a chicken, a tiny slice of ham, a roll, and a flask of wine.

The great dark eyes watched her movements with more than interest, while their owner did her best to hide the look of hunger which betrayed her terrible position.

Celestine St. Croix had been very near to death's borderland, and would have crossed the boundary but for the offices of a tiny child.

To this child the lonely woman had shown kindness and affection, and the little one learnt to love her, and many hours she would sit with her in the desolate room, seeing the articles of furniture going away one by one, and knowing, by the light of poverty, what those signs meant.

Celestine had had a little needlework from time to time, but she grew too ill to go and see about it, and little by little she faded and drooped till she took to her bed, and seemed too ill even to speak to the tiny creature who used to come and sit beside her upon the box which was now doing duty for a table, with tearful eyes.

This child had no mother, and her father, a rough, untaught fellow, took no heed of the tale of suffering which his small daughter more than once tried to tell him.

One day little Mary heard some women talking, and their words attracted her attention.

They were speaking of a lady whom they called the "Good Samaritan," and were saying how much real kindness she had shown to many in that town; and upon hearing that one of the women was now going to see her, the child followed, and watched her enter the house, wondering, in an unformed way, whether this good lady could help the one friend she had in the world.

She stood waiting outside the house, and saw the woman go away again, and she thought how she should like to go and knock at the door, but she was afraid.

So she went over to the iron railings in front of the house, and tried to look in at the window. The lamps were lighted within, and the child heard Mrs. Roslyn speaking to one of her servants very, very kindly.

Then she sat down at the piano, and having played a while, she sang divinely that beautiful song "The angel at the window"; and little Mary, who had never heard such sweet sounds before, remained, with her bright eyes fixed upon the singer with a vague idea that Heaven, of which she had heard at some time dimly, must be inside that room where the sweet-faced lady made such tender music.

The song finished, Mrs. Roslyn turned to the window, and saw that the servant had omitted to close the blind, and she arose at once to do it. She noticed the child clinging to the railings outside and smiled, for the little ones of the neighbourhood often came there to listen to her.

Mrs. Roslyn did not live in any very fashionable locality, as she might have done had she so elected; but no one was better known nor better respected in the place than herself. She was said to be a widow, and came to the town apparently friendless, but Mrs. Roslyn was too self-reliant a woman to starve like poor Madame Celestine St. Croix.

She went to the clergyman of the finest church in the best neighbourhood, and offered her services in the choir, and her voice was soon the general theme of conversation in the town of M—. She was asked to give lessons, and was quickly engaged to sing at concerts and oratorios.

Several managers of opera companies heard of the fame of Mrs. Roslyn, and came to M— to judge for themselves of her musical and vocal powers; but none of them could persuade her to appear on the stage, and it was in vain for any of them to attempt to move the decision of a woman like Mrs. Roslyn, whose will was as a rock for firmness.

The society of M— most gladly welcomed the accomplished singer whenever her com-

pany was attainable, but that was not very often.

Mrs. Roslyn seemed to think but little of those in prosperous circumstances. She was noticed to take blue-eyed children in her arms with marvellous tenderness, and it was wonderful how the little ones were quieted by her presence. And she possessed the same soothing influence over those in sickness and in trouble, but with the world in general she was indifferent and reserved.

People wondered that the favourite teacher and singer, who was making so much money, should live in a small house in an unfashionable quarter of the town—that is, the rich people wondered, but the poor did not.

There was no back door or dark alley into which Mrs. Roslyn could not go with perfect safety. All the suffering knew and loved her. She never preached to them; no one had ever received a tract from Mrs. Roslyn's hand.

Whether they were church people or chapel-goers, or had no religion at all, she treated them with equal kindness, and if ever she spoke of sacred subjects, it was merely to give a word of hope and Heavenly love.

Mrs. Roslyn's home, although small, was tasteful and refined and well-ordered; yet she spent but little of her earnings upon it, for she found no many to share them with.

In dress, she had a style of her own, and whether the material was costly or cheap, it was always made quite plainly, and showed off to perfection the beautiful proportions of her queenly figure.

Mrs. Roslyn was an elegant woman, and though past the prime of life, was still decidedly handsome. Her hair was dark and abundant, although touched here and there with silver streaks, while the earnest deep blue eyes looked out from the blackest lashes, the rest of her features being of a fine and aristocratic stamp; white the firm mouth could melt into the tenderest smiles, and yet could harden strangely, too, at an act of injustice.

Mrs. Roslyn took no notice whatever of the flow of society, nor of the fashions. She marked out her own path in life, and passed along it without the faintest deviation. She had a few real friends, but very few, in her own station in the world.

Calling acquaintances she totally declined. She had no mind to waste her time upon the frivolities of needless chatter.

Her life duties were to earn money, and to spend it to the best advantage for the good of the great human community, and this she conscientiously carried out.

If a look of intense sadness was sometimes surprised upon the proud, sweet face, no one knew what the sorrow was which caused it; nor were they likely to do so, for Mrs. Roslyn had never been known to speak of her past, even to her best friends, and none dared inquire into it.

There was something altogether impenetrable in the quiet reserve of the singer, and a pathos in her music, which showed that, however much under control was the spirit, it was all warmth and fervour within.

The people of M— had years since pronounced Mrs. Roslyn to be a walking mystery, and accepted her as she was.

Little Mary, clinging to the railings, felt a keen sense of disappointment when the singer let down the venetians with a firm hand, and great teardrops began to roll down her cheeks; but the music went on again, and the soft and beautiful song of "The Requital," with its sad and pathetic words, kept the little one's attention fixed. She could not be said to comprehend the story told in the song, but some of it seemed to reach her, and when it ceased she continued to weep.

As though drawn by some demand upon her sympathy, Mrs. Roslyn moved uneasily, her hands wandered aimlessly over the keys, until at length she arose, and went once more to the window, and there she could still see the child in the dim light outside; and her

subdued sobs reached her, striking home to the tenderest spot in her womanly heart.

Straightway she walked across the room, down the passage, and out at the hall door, and taking the weeping child by the hand, she stooped to her level.

"What is the matter, little one?" she inquired, gently. "Will you come in with me and tell me your trouble?"

The words and voice were enough to inspire the child with confidence, and little Mary was soon seated upon Mrs. Roslyn's knee, telling her about poor suffering Celestine St. Croix in the best words she could find.

"Is it your mother who is ill?" she asked; "and can you take me to see her?"

Mary shook her head and pointed to the sky, although the nearest sight to her vision was the ceiling—her childlike faith could look beyond.

Her dying mother had told her that she was going there, and that she would join her there one day; and that was all little Mary's religion, and to that she tenaciously clung in the many childish sorrows which came so thickly for the poor.

"Mother is gone there," replied the child, in an awed voice; "but I can take you to the lady."

And she did take her that very evening.

Celestine was startled from a restless, painful sleep, to see Mrs. Roslyn standing beside her, with her youthful girl holding her hand, and as she gazed into the calm, sweet face, its influence seemed to soothe her.

Celestine knew who she was.

She had often seen her go in and out the houses of the poor; she had heard her sing in the beautiful great church, and had shed tears over her touching rendering of "Comfort ye my people."

She had often longed for a touch of the singer's hand, for a word from those sweet, firm lips; but she had never dreamed that she would have one or the other, for Celestine had not been born to poverty; and it was impossible to live to ask for charity. She could die, but she could not beg.

She stretched out her hand to her visitor with a glad welcome in her dark eyes.

"I have longed to know you," she murmured, faintly, "and I am so—so glad you have come."

But for all that Celestine St. Croix was absolutely starving, she mentioned her sad condition by no word.

CHAPTER VIII.

CELESTINE ST. CROIX.

BUT Mrs. Roslyn required no telling. She knew at once what the hollow cheeks meant, the hungry gleam in the still beautiful eyes, backed by the bare surroundings of the comfortless home.

Still she said nothing to Celestine of her poverty, but begging Mary to remain with the woman she went to her home, and quickly returned with a bottle containing some strong hot beef tea, and a tin of Brand's extract of meat, knowing well how dangerous it would be to give the sufferer much to eat in her present starving state.

And having administered the beef tea, and left the meat-jelly, making Celestine promise to take it in small quantities every hour, she went to seek her greatest friend in M—, Dr. Martin; and he, having heard her story with interest, started off with her for Celestine's wretched home.

All that night both the doctor and Mrs. Roslyn remained with the well-sighing woman, who would undoubtedly have sunk before many hours, had not her terrible condition been so providentially discovered.

The following morning Dr. Martin clasped Mrs. Roslyn's hand.

"You have saved her," he whispered, "and may now safely leave her to attend to your duties. I will look in at noon, and see to her."

You will return, I know, when you can. She will now probably sleep for hours."

So they crept away, and for many days Mrs. Roslyn had been bringing Celestine back to life by very slow degrees, not daring really to satisfy the poor creature's hunger, but giving her all which it was safe for her to take.

And Celestine looked for the coming of Mrs. Roslyn as the watcher for the morning welcomes the sun rising in the East.

She and little Mary were the only bright things which had entered her weary life for so very, very long.

Having arranged Celestine's dinner upon the box beside the bed, Mrs. Roslyn knelt upon the floor, and fed her as though she were still a child, giving her sips of the ruby wine as well; and a faint glow flickered into the pale, hollow cheeks, which was followed by a smile from Mrs. Roslyn.

These visits brought a wonderful warmth to the lonely girl's heart, for Celestine St. Croix was but a girl in years still—just five-and-twenty—although she was old, indeed, in sorrow.

Still, she had many lonely hours, and it may be wondered at, that, kind as she was, Mrs. Roslyn had never once offered to provide a nurse for Celestine, but she instinctively knew how she would shrink from the contact of a stranger, and the exposure to her of her utter poverty, and the charity which was being bestowed upon her; and, so judging, she acted accordingly.

As soon as Celestine's delicate meal was over, Mrs. Roslyn took possession of the hard wooden box for a seat, and sat beside her, the thin hand clasped in hers.

"How can I ever thank you for all you have done for me?" inquired Celestine, her dark eyes raised to her friend's face full of tenderness and gratitude. "And oh! what shall I do when you go away to others? You have so many claims upon you, you cannot always be thinking of me, nor, dearly as I love you, would I like to be a burthen to you."

"Well! you see I am not gone yet, Celestine," returned the elder woman with one of her rare smiles. "And I may not be so easy to shake off as you seem to think. I have been much drawn to you, and I feel a friendship for you more than I ordinarily feel for others, even though I may equally strive to help them; and real friendship is, I take it, a strong and lasting desire for the good and happiness of another. This I feel for you, Celestine, and I cannot go away and leave you here sad and lonely. Tell me, how you are feeling to-day, little woman? If I may judge by your looks, you are really better."

"So I am," returned the girl, with bright, eager eyes; "I am very much better. Oh! you cannot think what good your kind words have done me. I was so terribly lonely; all I wanted was to die—only it was so slow and so painful—that was all I wanted. But now you have given me the desire to live, for you tell me I am your friend; and, dear Mrs. Roslyn, I have not one besides in all the world," and tears came into her eyes and dimmed them.

"What! not little Mary?" asked Mrs. Roslyn.

"Ah! poor child—yes. I am very fond of her, but she cannot understand my trouble, or the aching of my heart, though you do. I am quite sure that you do, dear friend."

"Yes, I do, Celestine, because I have suffered myself, and that alone gives us both a feeling of fellowship, does it not?"

"Ah! it does, indeed, and I am so sorry that trouble has reached you too;" and she placed her second frail hand upon the well-moulded one of Mrs. Roslyn, which bespoke power in every line and movement, although it must be admitted that it was small and feminine, and its touch was one of tenderness and compassion.

"Don't think about me," replied Mrs. Roslyn, the lines about her mouth relaxing.

"It is when trouble is new that we find it

unbearable. I am used to mine now—I have borne it so long—but Celestine, yours is newer. Let me help you if I can."

"It is five years old," she replied, a flush of excitement lighting up her face, "and how I have lived ever since I don't know. For two years I was so intensely happy, so unutterably content with my life. It was like one long pleasant dream. Then the awakening came! Oh! dear Mrs. Roslyn, think what it was, think what I felt, when I lost him." And she turned her great tear-laden agonized eyes up to the elder woman's, while the white lips trembled piteously.

"Lost him! He died then!" said Mrs. Roslyn, in sympathetic tones.

"I think I would rather have known that than bear the cruel uncertainty I have done during the last five years," returned the girl with suppressed emotion, "but he was well when I saw him last; quite, quite well."

"And where was that?"

"At Naples; he changed while we were there, and he told me he was in trouble, and that he would be obliged to leave me for a time. He went, and I have never, never seen him since."

"Nor heard of him?"

"Oh, yes, I have heard from him, or I should not be here. Six months after he left me I received a letter from him, written from this town, where he told me he was then residing and doing well, and he said he had taken a passage for me in a sailing-vessel to come out to him, giving me full directions."

"I had sold off everything of value I possessed to support myself during these six months of waiting, but I had retained his gifts, and with these treasured relics and the few clothes I had left, I sailed for Australia in the ship in which my passage had been taken, following out the directions he had given me to the letter, with a joyous heart, for he was my all!"

"I had no one else in the world, and I loved him with my whole soul, implicitly believing in his promise to meet the ship on my arrival and take me to my home."

"The captain had but few passengers on board—he was carrying a cargo to the Antipodes, not human beings—but he had been asked to bring me as a passenger, and he had consented."

"He was very kind to me in his rough and nautical fashion, poor man; and the more so when the vessel came into port and was unladen, and no one came to meet me. He allowed me to remain on board till the ship sailed again, and because I had no money he lent me some to bring me here to my home."

"I have never been able to pay that money back, dear Mrs. Roslyn," she continued, regretfully. "When I reached this town I could find no such address as that which had been given me."

"I went to one or two clergymen for advice, and to the police authorities, but they all seemed to regard me with suspicion—my foreign accent alone seemed to make me enemies."

"I was in the deepest distress. Here I was in an unknown land, a stranger and alone. I had no money to carry me back, neither had I a home to go to, nor friends to whom to apply for assistance."

"Moreover, I thought it would be better to remain as near as possible to the address he had given me; so with a sad heart I sold the locket he gave me, from which I took out his picture and his hair, and I haunted the docks and the post-office."

"But he never came, nor has he written. One by one his presents were sold, till I came to the last; then it seemed as though famine stared me in the face!"

"I had to seek a cheaper room, and I obtained a little needlework from a shop in the town; and so I have existed for five years, till my health entirely gave way, and at last I was quite unable to work. I have told you my history, dear Mrs. Roslyn; tell me what you make of it."

"Shall I ever see him again? Heaven knows how dear he was to me, and that I would have borne any trouble by his side, and would have followed him to the world's end. Oh! dear friend," she continued, excitedly, "tell me, is he dead? or do you think that we shall meet again? Where can he be if he has taken five years to find me?" and her thin hand clutched that of Mrs. Roslyn convulsively.

"Did he care for you very much, Celestine?" she asked, with a saddened inflexion of voice.

"I was his world," she answered, "even as he was mine!" Her eyes lit up with a wonderful light. "And we were very happy for two years after our marriage, till my husband's troubles came. He seemed to alter then."

Mrs. Roslyn sat in thoughtful silence. She felt truly sorry for the poor young alien, so far from her native land, with no friend save herself to help her. With her knowledge of the world, she firmly believed that Celestine's husband had not been so fond of her as she imagined, and that he had, in truth, deserted her for ever; but she had not the heart to tell her so.

After a long pause, during which the French girl watched her face with anxious eyes, Mrs. Roslyn turned to her with wonderful kindness expressed in every feature.

"Celestine," she said gently, "I cannot offer an opinion, but both you and the man you appear to love still, are in Higher hands, and, if he lives He may see fit to bring you together again; but, child, there are many chances against it, and my advice to you is not to waste your precious life in pining and poverty. Give me full particulars on paper, and if I can gain any information of Mr. St. Croix, or his whereabouts, be sure I will do so. For the rest, get well, child, and I must find some congenial occupation for you. Needlework at starvation wages is too hard a life for you; you must not think of it again. Monsieur St. Croix is, I suppose, French like yourself?" she added, in an interrogatory manner.

"I do not know, but I think not," answered Celestine, with hesitation. "He spoke our language fluently, yet not quite with our accent. Henri called himself French, but I think he really was not!"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Roslyn, thoughtfully. "Why should he deceive you, Celestine? You must show me his likeness! You have it still, have you not?"

"Oh, yes!" replied the girl, and drawing a small packet from under her pillow, she placed it in her friend's hands.

CHAPTER IX.

LADY DALKEITH'S PORTRAIT.

MAY DALKEITH laid her paint-brush aside, and stretching out her hand she clasped that of Guy Forrester, and threw her arm about his neck with loving confidence, looking the while into his handsome face.

"Gny," she said, "I have been thinking a great deal about the 'Gipsy.' She looks so pathetic. She must, I am sure, have a history, and I want you to tell it to me, dear."

There was a pause before he answered her, and an expression of anything but pleasure passed over his features.

"Don't you think May, that even if the lady has a history, which I do not admit, that it is most unlikely that I should be aware of it; and should I even chance to be so, do you consider that it would be an act of honour to reveal it even to you?" he asked, a little scornfully.

May flushed and suddenly withdrew her hand.

"I think you know that I should be the last person in the world to suggest your doing anything dishonourable," she replied, warmly, "but if I am to be your wife, Gny, there must be no secrets between us. There can

be no real love where they exist, and nothing less will satisfy my heart, so I consider I have the right to ask what she was to you. If only a friend to whom you showed kindness, then she shall be mine too; but I want to know, Guy. I do really."

And she looked at him earnestly, and with an expression of decision which he had never seen in her before. For a moment he had no answer ready; then he broke into a merry peal of laughter, and caught her impetuously in his arms.

"Jealous, I declare, my sweet young recluse of St. Ormo, my 'Lady of the Lake'! Has that green-eyed monster penetrated into even this sunny out-of-the-world region? Send him away, Hawthorn. He will eat up all the sweet peeping buds of promise, and the tender green leaves of contentment, and turn your paradise into a wilderness. Have nothing to do with him, little woman!" and he looked deep down into the forget-me-not eyes.

But this time May Dalkeith was not to be wheedled.

She had made up her mind to hear full particulars of that beautiful haunting face, and she did not mean to let Guy turn her aside from it.

In fact, the idea that he was trying to do so made her cling to it the more tenaciously; for although May was loving and gentle, she still had inherited a very strong will from both her parents.

The artist now saw the first glimpse of it, and he was far too clever a tactician to attempt to combat her expressed wish, as Sir Roger would have done one raised in opposition to his own.

Guy Forrester's aim was to lead her away from the subject, and leave her to forget it, and with nine natures out of ten his plan would have succeeded.

"Well, well, little one, I will forgive you," he said, generously, throwing the blame thus upon her in his most airy fashion. "But I thought your doctrine was that which can be expressed in a well-known quotation, 'Trust me all in all or not at all.' Jealousy never drew two people nearer yet, believe me. But now we will drop the subject. Do you remember my promise to you last night?"

"Of course I do. You said you would give me a picture. Have you really brought it, Guy?"

"Come and see," he replied, with one of his most telling smiles, as he linked his hand through her arm, and turned her away from the sight of Gipsy's face.

"It is a shame to remain in this dull little arbour when there is such glorious sunshine to bask in! My present to you is in the punt, Hawthorn. Will you come on board and inspect it, and give your verdict upon its merits or demerits?"

And he led her gently down the winding path, through the flowers and shrubs, to the edge of the lake; and drawing the punt quite close to the landing-stone he assisted her in, and having got out the cushion from the box where it was kept, he arranged it for her comfort, and very quickly settled her down.

That done, he raised the pole and propelled the boat with the same easy grace which she had noticed in his movements upon the very first occasion of her seeing him.

Suddenly he turned and looked at her.

"Hawthorn, I shall have to offer you that proverbial penny," he laughed. "I have a silver one on my chain," and as he spoke he drew a cluster of coins from his pocket, and held them up in her view, and she noticed that among them there was a tiny golden band, such as are used in Spain for betrothal pledges, two being sold on one ring, to be divided by the happy lovers.

"Guy, who gave you that?" she asked, her gaze intently fixed upon it.

"What, the penny? I really cannot say. I have had it from my boyhood."

"No, no, the golden band—the Spanish engagement pledge!" she answered, impatiently.

A hot flush overspread his face, and, dying out, left him pale.

"I have had that from boyhood also," he rejoined, with affected nonchalance. "It may have been given me by one of my early sweethearts; it is impossible for me to tell you which, but sure I am I never numbered a señorita among that favoured few," and he broke out into the old song:

"I was merry, I was merry
When my little lovers came,
With a lily, or a cherry,
Or a new-invented game."

But May's voice stopped him.

"Who was the donor, Guy?" she persisted.

"Non mi ricordo," he returned, with a smile. "You must not expect me to remember such absurd trifles."

Silence fell between them, and he lifted the pole once more and took the punt straight out into the middle of the lake, and sat down upon the seat in front of May.

"If you have quite finished your little game of cross questions and crooked answers, Hawthorn, I should like to show you what I have for you!" he said, letting his powerful eyes rest upon her.

They influenced her, as they always did; making her young heart stir and flutter, and the tender flesh he knew so well to rise upon the fair cheek.

"Now we are going to be friends again, darling!" he whispered, softly, and, changing his position to the cushion beside her, he slipped his arm about her slim waist, and drew her head down upon his breast.

She rested there very quietly; a look of contentment coming into the tender blue eyes.

"Do you love me, Hawthorn?" he said, softly. "Do you love me enough to trust me all in all, as I do you?"

She nestled to his side a little closer, and he stooped and kissed her innocent young lips, till the sweet face glowed rosy red; then he gently disengaged himself from her, and, leaning forward, he drew towards him a large-sized package, which was evidently a framed picture, wrapped in strong brown paper.

"Would you like to unfasten it?" he asked, smiling at her. "Ah! I thought so! Now, let me see, are you of a frugal mind, like Mrs. Johnny Gilpin? Will you undo all the knots in this delightful piece of whipeord, or will you accept the services of my knife?"

"Oh! the knife, certainly. Guy, do be quick!" she laughed, merrily, the face of Gipsy and the golden hand forgotten, as she began at the knots with her fingers.

"What, going in for the frugal, after all?" he inquired.

"I must do something; you're so long!" she complained, mischievously.

"I won't contradict you," he returned, his dark eyes fixed on her dancing blue ones; and the thought came to him that he would like May to always look like that. He held the penknife above his head out of her reach.

"What will you give me for it?" he asked, suggestively, and May answered him with demureness; for all that the azure eyes were eloquent with fun.

"I would thank you in my best English," she replied, tormentingly, and he thereupon returned the knife to his pocket. "Oh! you wretch!" she cried, making a dive at him, but too late.

He smiled at her triumphantly.

"What will you give me for it, Hawthorn?" he asked again, in that dangerously soft voice of his.

The red lips were raised at once to his.

"Will that do?" she inquired, half shyly. "Excellent," he laughed, as he stooped and kissed them.

"You have offered the right currency now; the price is the correct one, and the coin rings true," and he merrily handed the knife to her.

She seized upon it eagerly, and snip went the cord in all directions, as quickly as she could cut it; and crumple went the paper as

she hastily threw it back, but only another layer of white met her view, and lying upon it was Guy Forrester's card, on which was written in his own handwriting, "A first offering of love to Hawthorn." And on a sheet of paper was copied out the words of the song she was singing when first he saw her and heard her voice.

"Tell me, oh! tell me, Rose of the morn,
What whispers the dew, the dew on thy breast?" &c. &c. &c.

She lifted her eyes full of softness to his, and full of love.

"You remember when I heard that song, Hawthorn?" he asked.

"And how you continued it," she returned, with emotion. "How could I forget it, Guy?"

"Keep those lines then, May, and you never will. They were our introduction: not a sufficiently formal one to please Sir Roger, I daresay, but one that brought our hearts together, as our two names pronounced in his stiff tones never could have done."

"How do you know that they are stiff, Guy?" she asked, with a smile of amusement.

"I have heard so," he returned. "There are people in the world who remember him. Lord Rangor does."

"I suppose Lord Rangor is an old man, then?" she remarked.

"Old! not a bit of it. His age is about thirty-five—not more, but he recollects your parents perfectly."

"Both of them?" she enquired, eagerly.

"Yes, both. In fact, I may say that he was very fond of your mother in his own fashion. Boys are afflicted with calf-love often, you know; but I don't suppose he ever ventured to tell her so, either before her marriage or after; for Lady Dalkeith had, I understand, a very queenly way with her. I am quite sure of one thing, he thinks there never was any other woman like her, and it was he who lent me her photograph."

Then he stopped, not wishing to let out the secret of his gift before May should look at it.

"Guy, if he liked my mother so much," she said, eagerly, "no doubt he has kept up some sort of friendship with her. Surely he can tell me whether she is dead or alive?" and she raised her earnest eyes inquiringly to his face.

For one moment his eyes drooped—only one; then he took her hand soothingly within his own.

"He does not know, May, darling. I have asked," he replied, in low accents.

"Guy, I have heard that she still lives!" she cried, excitedly, "and I must learn the truth!"

"Why not ask your father?" he said, watching her attentively.

"Ah! why not! I will do so, Guy. I had made up my mind to do that this morning. I am too old to be put aside now; he will find that he must tell me the truth!" and that look of decision settled upon May Dalkeith's face and hardened it.

Guy Forrester did not much like these moods. He thought they would be a little uncomfortable in a wife; so he stretched out his hand and uncovered the picture, almost before May had noticed his action.

Then her gaze fell full upon the beautiful, proud, sweet face, with its deep blue eyes and black-fringed lashes and refined features, and was riveted upon it—absolutely riveted. It was a life-like portrait of what Lady Dalkeith was before her marriage, before the lines of sorrow and disappointment had somewhat altered her.

It was the same face which May could remember leaning over her in her very early childhood; and the wondrously sweet mouth seemed now to smile back at her, just as it did then; the beautiful eyes to look tenderly into her own.

It was a long time before May raised her own from the picture, when she did so they were soft with unshed tears.

"I need not ask who it is, Guy," she said, gratefully. "I know it is my darling mother. And oh! Guy, how can I ever thank you for painting such an exquisite picture for me? And if after all she lives, think of my joy when I meet her!"

The artist laid his hand upon her arm.

"Don't be too hopeful, May," he said, in his gentle way. "It is true that Lady Dalkeith *did* live for some time after your father separated from her, and all the world cried shame upon him for the act; but if you ask him now, I feel sure that he will tell you she is dead!" he said slowly, and with emphasis. May regarded him with wide-open horrified eyes.

"Oh, Guy, how cruel!" she cried, clasping her hands together in her distress. "How cruel! I shall never feel that I can love papa again!"

(To be continued.)

JUDITH.

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CHAPTER XXXII.—(continued.)

JOHNSON'S eyes glowed like fire as they rested on Judith's pale, proud face, and his voice grew very soft and very persuasive as he spoke again.

"Then let me try promises instead. Now that we are alone, I need not attempt to deny your accusations of the other day. I have done all that you suspected, and worse; but I will atone. I will restore to your father the fortune, the good name, of which I robbed him. I will relax my hold on Julius Sherston if you desire it; and even then I shall be rich enough to give you every luxury you could wish, more than you ask! You shall be my queen, I your humblest slave; happy if by my most strenuous efforts to please I can earn a smile or word of thanks!"

That each sentence came straight from his heart, and was honestly intended, could not be doubted; but Judith's loathing for the man was too deeply rooted to be easily overcome.

She was not in the least touched by his emotion, certainly not turned by it from her first decision.

"I would not marry you to save myself from starvation!" she declared, in clear, cool tones.

"And to starvation it may come, though you do not realise it now. You are utterly powerless to stand against the tide of public opinion which is running so strongly against you! I doubt if they will let you remain in this hotel. I am certain that no one else will accept your services in any capacity whatever. Through the length and breadth of the Panjab you are—and will remain—a marked woman!"

Strong as was her courage, firm as was her determination not to show any sign of weakness, at least to him, she could not conceal the fact that she was wounded to the very quick.

Being a woman, and naturally sensitive to thought of shame, every feeling of delicacy was outraged by his words, and she could not control a violent, convulsive shudder.

"Besides," he went on, remorselessly, "you are entirely without resources, without money, or anything you can turn into money."

"For that you are responsible! Do you fancy I did not guess at whose bidding I was robbed, and why?" she cried, impulsively.

Not attempting to refute the accusation, he took up his hat from the table where he had laid it, and moved towards the door.

"Remember," he said, impressively, "that I am always at your service, always ready to forgive, to forget everything but my love for you, which is unalterable! That at last you will come to me I am sure; and I want you to know that when you do, the past will be blotted out, the future shall be all yours to do with what you please. You shall never regret I won you—though against your will."

She had been standing throughout the interview, and stood still long after he left her, her limbs and features rigid, her heart chilled by all that he had said, most of all by his last speech.

Was it possible that it contained any likelihood, any truth, that he could steal from her all strength of mind, and capability of independent choice, as he had stolen her less valuable possessions?

Would she be forced against her own volition to turn to him for help, he conquering her obstinate aversion by the hidden force of some influence it would be impossible for her to resist?

She remembered at that moment much that Mrs. Scott-Courtney had told her of the wonderful results obtained, by animal magnetism she had called it, and had expressed a belief that there were no limits to its strange compelling power.

That reminded her that, effusive as that lady had been at first, latterly she had rather seemed to avoid her society than seek it; and that the civilian's wife had looked hot and uncomfortable the last time she had addressed her.

Though the cessation of their amenities had been a relief to her at the time it distressed her now, as she could only put it down to the fact that they had heard these reports, and believed them.

But what troubled her most to remember was the fact that the men who were staying in the hotel had also changed their demeanour.

They were a little less deferential, more impressive, more confident; and only the day before she had to rebuke what she had regarded as a boyish impertinence, and on that account subsequently pardoned.

Her eyes were opened now, and she saw clearly what it all meant—why the men were more familiar, and the women less so, hot tears of shame making everything dim for a moment—but she brushed them resolutely away.

However cruel her fate, no grieving could improve the position of affairs, nor make it less unbearably galling to her pride.

She must act now, and act promptly.

Opening the door, she told a hitmatghar, who was passing, to let the mistress of the hotel know she wished to speak to her; and in a shorter time than she had anticipated Mrs. Long stood before her, a slightly strained expression on her generally pleasant face.

Judith tried to persuade herself that it was only imagination that her manner was stiffer than usual, and the smile which she greeted her a forced one.

"It was very good of you to come to me at once. I want your help. I don't know what I should have done had it not been for your kindness. I am terribly friendless!"

"That is an unfortunate position for a young lady like yourself, so beautiful, so uncommon-looking—if you will forgive my rudeness in mentioning it."

"I am beginning to see that; to understand that things cannot go on like this. I must go home, back to England, and as a first step had better telegraph for the money to pay my passage. Will you lend me sufficient to do that?"

The landlady hesitated a moment. It was in her heart to offer the whole amount necessary to see her safe with her family, removed from further temptation, but a prudential thought restrained her.

If half that she had heard against this beautiful winsome creature were true, there might be more to learn to her discredit. She did not dare to risk the money, her own affairs not being in a too flourishing condition.

The compunction she felt in restraining her first generous impulse caused her to answer more cordially,—

"You are welcome to the amount of the telegram, Miss Holt. If you will write it out I will send it off at once."

A form was found and carefully filled in,

that Mr. Holt might neither feel unduly alarmed, nor yet underate the danger and unpleasantness of his daughter's position.

Only some days after it had been despatched did Judith begin to fear, whether, in her desire to spare him anxiety, she had not been too vague, too regardless of her own pressing necessity for help.

No such doubts disturbed her then. She felt brighter in spirits than she had done for days as she finished her message and folded it in two.

When offered to her, Mrs. Long did not at once take it, but stood idly gazing nervously with the lace on her collarette and cleared her throat as though she meant to speak.

"Is there anything else I ought to do?" asked Judith.

"It is very unpleasant for me to have to say, miss, but —"

"If it is the money I owe you, do not be afraid, Mrs. Long. All that will be repaid. If it were only that. I do not know how I can ever return your kindness."

The landlady gave a great gulp as though something were impeding her speech.

Her face was crimson as she answered quickly,—

"Don't speak of that, miss, I beg. If it were only myself concerned, you might stay as long as you like, and I'd never bother about the money either. But you see this hotel is my livelihood; my husband and the children are dependent on it as well as me. The fact is, the other ladies have got something against you, and insist on my sending you away."

She never looked in the girl's direction as she spoke. With instinctive delicacy she turned her head away altogether lest Judith might imagine she was observed; but the hopelessness in the voice struck her with sharp pain as the question came,—

"Do you wish me to go at once—to-day?"

"No, indeed," she protested, eagerly. "I'd not listen to such a thing for a moment. You might get an answer to your telegram tomorrow; but it would take quite a week for you to get the money from anywhere and to arrange your departure. No; for one week longer you shall stay if I lose every customer—which I shan't all the same, for they know when they're well off, and mine is the only decent hotel in Jaalpoore—though I say it as shouldn't."

"You have made me very comfortable I know; but I should never forgive myself if I harmed you in return. Let me go—but where am I to go?" she broke out, wildly.

Mrs. Long took her hand in both of hers, patting it kindly.

"There, there, don't fret, my dear. It will all come right in the end, and you shall stay here the next week in spite of everyone, or my name's not Mary Long."

And with the comfort contained in this assurance Judith had perforce to be content.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ROUSED TO ACTION.

WHEN three or four days passed, and no answer came to her telegram, and no letters by the English mail, matters assumed a still more serious aspect. Mrs. Scott-Courtney and the wife of the young civilian no longer honoured Judith by even a curt nod; while the men, though almost ignoring her presence when the other ladies were there, in private made effusive offers of assistance, all of which were most summarily and indignantly rejected. It was also evident that Mrs. Long was growing suspicious, and inclined to doubt her own wisdom in throwing good money after bad.

She was beginning to think it would be an advantage to herself when the week was over and Judith gone, even if she never received a farthing in return for her outlay.

At this juncture, and when her spirits were

at the lowest ebb, one of Judith's friends came forward to help her.

She had been out for a walk, choosing the dusk that she might not be recognised by anyone who had known her before these misfortunes fell upon her; and as she passed along a road that led into the Mall, a carriage had driven by, so close that some of the mud thrown up by the wheels had been splashed on to her frock.

The occupants of the carriage never saw her as she moved along under the shadow of some trees, but she saw them plainly—Mrs. Haro, leaning back among the cushions, the same false smile on her lips and in her eyes, while leaning over her with an air of unutterable devotion was Lawrence St. Quentin.

The next moment they had passed, and Judith was left walking on alone, an amused expression on her face, and no trace of bitterness in her heart. Her late experience had shown her how shallow had been her liking for the handsome young lancer, as shallow as his transient passion for herself, with no power to strengthen nor to console her in all she had been fated to endure.

She could only wonder at her former weakness and indecision, regretting the wasted feelings that had been roused—yet not altogether wasted since they had given her depth and breadth of feeling, taught her wisdom.

She wondered why, at that very moment, when it was shown her how delusive and how fruitless love might be, that her thoughts turned to another lover, who with no hope had remained true, and would be, she believed, faithful to the end. The love he offered had been very worthy her acceptance, yet she had rejected it, bidden him chasten it, change it into a passionless friendship. And this he had probably done ere this, succeeding in a very difficult task, just when failure would have been infinitely sweeter to her who had imposed it.

If only Avon were here how brightened everything would be, she told herself; and a look of yearning fondness came into her eyes which would have told a welcome story to him whom it most concerned. Pity it is that such awakenings so often come too late. The pity of it, indeed.

Then it was, with these thoughts roused and running riot in her breast, she reached her own comfortable room in the hotel, and there on the table found a letter.

Opening it and turning to see the signature, she found it to be from Colonel Lea-Creagh; and sighed a little to think that he she had laughed at so often and despised should be the only one to come forward in her trouble.

The letter began in somewhat stilted style:—

"DEAR MISS HOLT,—Although I thought I had schooled myself to believe that your path and mine must run for ever not parallel, but apart and in different directions, I cannot stand aside and see with undisturbed composure the distress you have been, and must be suffering still.

"It was a matter for wonder to me that Lady Sherston should have thought herself justified in throwing off her undoubted responsibility as regards yourself, whatever reason or fancied reason she may have had for doing so; but women have strong views on all these subjects, and it is hard for us to say how far they may be wrong, we judging from a lower, if a broader, standpoint.

"But however this may be, whether you have been to blame or no, I have cared for you too sincerely not to wish to help you in this emergency; and I would have gone to you at once to offer my services had I not felt assured that a man's interference under the circumstances would only do you harm.

"It is for the same reason, that people may have no further cause for scandal, so far as you are concerned, that I write this now, and do not visit you in person. Nor am I writing vaguely. I believe I can render material

assistance if you will authorise me to act on your behalf.

"This morning Mr. Sherston's Madrasse bearer came, and informed me that he had strong reasons to suspect a fellow-servant—an ayah—of complicity in the theft practised on you about a fortnight ago. He declares she was not the prime mover, but a tool in the hands of some one whom he more than hints holds the position of a gentleman, and therefore was presumably not actuated by greed.

"In point of fact, he declares it was a plot against you, and that he can help to elucidate what at present seems so mysterious. Apparently he has some great liking for yourself, or else hatred for the persons against whom he is endeavouring to prove the guilt.

"In any case, natives being proverbially untrustworthy, I did not care to move in the matter without your sanction, and now have only to assure you with what pleasure I will take your instructions and carry them out; also, as I hear you are in present need of pecuniary assistance, I venture to add the request that you will honour me by allowing me to be your banker until other arrangements can be made. I should be very grateful for this mark of your esteem.

"And now, dear Miss Holt, I must end this letter, which, long as it is, has not expressed one-half of what I feel. I am sure everything seems very dark and hopeless to you just now, but most troubles are merely transient. You are very young, very beautiful, and to such as you temptations come thick and fast. The past is past, and will not always be remembered against you. Believe me there is nothing that by quiet patience cannot be lived down.—I am your faithful well-wisher,

"JOSEPH LEA-CREAGH."

Judith read the letter to the end, then crushed it deliberately in her hand, feeling no anger, only a sort of hopeless disgust with her fate as it was then.

Notwithstanding the kindly feeling therein expressed, nothing had caused her such keen pain since Winifred's death as this well-meant offer of help. So clearly was it shown to her that the writer had believed all he had heard, and only attempted to stand by her still from a sense of loyalty, a feeling that having loved once, he could not desert her in this dire necessity.

She tried to reason on the subject calmly, to plead on his behalf, that he was no longer young, and had learnt to distrust first impressions and outward appearances, having probably been often deceived by them, and been taught, by bitter experience, that the evil is a more likely solution of any problem than the good.

A man at his period of life—so she had read and been told—was more likely to think the worst of women than the best.

His first illusions, the dreams of boyhood, fading gradually or dispelled by some sharp shock, his mind would naturally incline to the other extreme, and this stage would probably last longer than the first, there being so much to strengthen him in his unbelief in the society in which at present he was thrown.

By-and-by it would be different again. He would marry a nice wife or gain some sweet, pure-minded woman as his friend, in either of which cases he would revert to his first opinions, the strong bias a good man always has to believe every woman better than himself.

So she told herself, trying to soothe her strong excitement, but without any very great success.

The more she considered the matter the fiercer became her resentment against the author of all this mischief—the man who, professing to love her, had worked her all this harm, with the intention of driving her to extremities, so that she might not be able to reject his suit.

Hitherto she had contented herself with remaining on the defensive, meeting his repeated attacks with a quiet, if scornful, de-

fiance. Now, for the first time, she began to think of reprisals, of fighting for her own sake, for her own good name as well as her father's, and of the fortune of which he had been robbed.

To do this she must carry the war into the enemy's country, and though realising her own powerlessness, standing as she did alone, with the hand of every man against her, she yet remained determined and undaunted.

Plenty of spirits she had always possessed; it had only required rousing, having been paralysed for the time by the string of misfortunes which had beset her; but Lea-Creagh's letter had given her the required stimulus, and for this she was grateful, though it did violence to her pride to answer it in a friendly spirit, as she ultimately determined to do, in pursuance of her plans.

Her note was very brief and to the purpose.

"DEAR COLONEL LEA-CREAGH,—Many thanks for your kind offer, of which I am glad to avail myself. I, too, have reason to believe that the robbery was a planned thing, and that though the actual thief was the ayah who used to wait on Miss Sherstone and on me, the prime mover in the matter was Mr. Johnson. If you can prove that it was so, I shall be very grateful indeed.—Yours truly, JUDITH HOLT."

Of his wish to lend her money she took no notice; though she could ignore it then, she could never forgive him the fact that he had thought her capable of all those acts of which she had been accused. Whenever she thought of it she clenched her small white hands; and had Johnson seen her compressed lips, the ominous glitter in her blue eyes as she folded and despatched her letter, he would, perhaps, have acknowledged her a formidable enemy, and even then withdrawn from the contest. But though he thought of her often he never thought of her so. Always in his visions he saw her crushed and hopeless, clinging to him for help, he her saviour, all others having failed her in her need.

Though he had seen her at her proudest, when self-reliance was natural to her, and she had not feared the malice of any man, nor envy of her own sex, he would scarcely have recognised her then, nor realised that the woman he had known—soft and womanly always, in spite of her splendid physique, and a dignity that was innate—was one and the same with this other, who, with the mien of an offended goddess, stood erect, alone, breathing vows of vengeance, resolute to succeed in her enterprise, though in so doing she trampled every feminine tradition, all gentleness and delicacy of feeling under foot. It was he who had made her desperate. He must, she said to herself, looking very white, very determined, and terribly stern as she said it, be prepared to reap the consequences of his own acts.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

WHEN NIGHT IS DARKEST.

It was a very different Judith who took her seat at the breakfast-table next morning. It had been her custom lately to take her meals in her own room, and so avoid the unpleasantness with which she would otherwise have been subjected, and as she came in Mrs. Scott-Courtney drew herself up frigidly, and the civilian's young and not very wise wife blushed crimson as if she had herself been detected in an impropriety, while the young men who were present exchanged glances and seemed inclined to laugh.

Judith, no longer a girl over-weighted by a cruel because unmerited, burden of shame, but a woman, resolute to resist her destiny and shape it to her own ends, remained quite cool and unmolested, only a hard look in her eyes betraying she had noticed and resented her reception.

She bore herself so bravely and with such quiet dignity that the women, who both

watched her narrowly, beginning to doubt if they had been wise to condemn her outright, were visibly impressed; and when she left the table Mrs. Scott-Courtney made room for her with a half bow.

Though the victory was a slight one, yet it was accepted as a good omen, and Judith started her self-imposed labours with new vigour.

Her first step was to draw out a statement on paper, in which all her reasons were given for believing Johnson to be an alias for Michael Straghan, the absconding clerk, and, again, for Mr. Collett, a criminal on a larger and more ambitious scale; and this she did in a most business-like fashion.

In the meantime she had written to the Commissioner for the pen-and-ink likeness she had given into his charge, and his reply was a serious check to the game she meant to play.

"Sir Julius Sherston much regrets," he wrote, "that the sketch to which Miss Holt refers in her note has been either mislaid or lost. Should it be subsequently found, Sir Julius Sherston will lose no time in forwarding it to Miss Holt's address."

This, however, instead of daunting her, proved a spur to her courage, rendering her the more determined to win, in spite of the heavy odds against her.

Woman's wit could avail her little here; all delicate weapons, such as it would be natural she should use, would be foiled at once by a dogged effrontery they could scarcely hope to pierce.

Some heavier force was required to storm such a solid resistance; not unaided could she expect to gain the end she had in view.

If she could only learn the name of some respectable solicitor, she might put the case in his hands and depend upon his wider experience.

Consulting Mrs. Long on the subject, she was informed by her, that Mr. De Souza was well thought of as a young pleader of some influence, (a pleader, she explained, being the Anglo-Indian equivalent for a lawyer), and, moreover, as he had still his way to make in his profession, he might be willing to undertake her case on the understanding he should pay himself out of the damages he gained.

This reminded Judith how terribly she was hampered by the want of money, and the proposition seemed such an easy method of solving the difficulty, that she decided at once to do as advised.

Determined also to lose no time, she at once put on her hat and walked over to the office, where she was told she would certainly find the lawyer at that hour.

It was not very far, but being the middle of the day the heat was intense, and the road so dusty and shadeless, that in the thick black gown she wore out of reverence to Winifred's memory, Judith soon grew very exhausted, and was glad to reach her destination.

By a Bengalee baboo of pompous, if not very cleanly, appearance, she was ushered into Mr. De Souza's presence, and was rather aghast to find the subordinate not much darker in complexion than his superior.

She had been long enough in the country to understand the different grades of colour, and to unhesitatingly put down the slight tall man who rose to meet her as being at least twelve annas in the rupee—to borrow an expression she had once heard used by Mrs. Trevor, whose horror of such people was intense, and characteristic!

It was, however, too late to retreat, and, with a little grave bow, she accepted the chair he offered, and told him on what understanding she had come to him, and for what purpose.

"I am absolutely without money at present," she admitted, frankly; "but if I can prove the identity of the man who robbed my father you should not regret having helped me."

"You have been rightly informed so far," he answered her. "I have on several occasions undertaken cases where payment was depen-

dent on my success; but, needless to say, I have only agreed to these terms when I thought the chances of victory reduced to something like a certainty."

Judith remained silent, a little disconcerted by the businesslike air with which he regarded the situation.

All women, and particularly those to whom nature has given some special grace of face or form, or what is perhaps more ardently to be desired, of manner, are in a measure inclined to take somewhat for granted the services men are indeed generally very glad to render. And Judith, being one of those who without an effort charmed, may be forgiven if she had fallen unconsciously into what she was quick enough to see was in this instance a mistake.

The man to whom she had applied was perhaps the last one in the world who would be weak enough to engage on a labour of obivality.

"May I ask to whom I have the honour of speaking?" he questioned, politely, but with intense curiosity in his gaze.

"My name is Miss Holt."

She was a little startled to see how at her words the expression of his face altered in a moment.

His full brown eyes—which, after the manner of even semi-Oriental orbs, seemed to swim in moisture—rested on her still admiringly, but the diffidence that had also been noticeable in his manner disappeared as though by magic.

Though the circle in which the Commissioner moved was not the one in which he himself was best known, he had not failed to hear the scandal connected with the dismissal of their pretty governess, nor was he by any means averse to hearing the other side of the story.

He drew his chair a shade closer, and asked her, with rather a jaunty air,—

"How he could oblige Miss Holt?"

Understanding perfectly the reason of the change in his demeanour, Judith felt that she could not afford to resent it, and with heightened colour told him, in the fewest possible words, the facts of the matter, handing him, in conclusion, the paper on which she had written it all out plainly, lest she should have forgotten to demonstrate any important point.

His professional instincts fully aroused, he studied it intently, his face growing graver as he proceeded, pausing every now and then in his perusal to have a sentence explained, while Judith watched him anxiously.

"Well, what is your opinion?" she asked, as at last he laid the document on the table beside him, not relinquishing his hold upon it, though evidently having grasped all that it contained.

"You must let me reserve that until you have answered a few questions. Now to keep to one subject at a time, choosing that with which you are naturally most concerned, tell me—How long is it since Mr. Collett made off with your father's property and papers?"

"About ten months ago."

"And when did you meet him again?"

"Directly after my arrival here—three or four months later."

"I suppose I may infer that detectives had been at once put upon his track? How was it that you were more successful than they? Had they no idea of his whereabouts?"

"My father wrote that they had traced him to India, but no further."

"Ah!" with a deep-drawn breath, as though of intelligence. "And was it after this information or before it that you recognised, or thought you recognised, the runaway in Mr. Johnson?"

"It was afterwards," she confessed a little reluctantly, seeing the drift of his remarks.

"Then I must presume he had disguised himself very completely to have eluded your suspicions so long?"

"I don't know. I never saw him in England, but I believe his hair used to be grey."

"You never saw him?" he repeated after her, blankly. "Then, my dear young lady, how on earth—"

"It was his voice I knew again, an expression I heard him use as he passed out of my father's house one day, I being out of sight at the time."

"And it was after your father's information, not before, that you recognised his voice as the same you had heard once?"

"Yes," she assented again, shamefacedly.

"And you have no photograph of him?"

"I had a sketch sent to me of Mr. Collett that exactly resembled Mr. Johnson in every detail."

"And you have brought that with you?" leaning forward eagerly, as he began to consider that there might be something in her story.

"It is lost, or rather I gave it into Sir Julius Sherston's keeping, and he says that he has lost it."

"A statement that you apparently do not believe. May I ask what motive you think he might have in suppressing it?"

"He has a motive, but what it is I do not exactly know, only that it must be connected with the time when Mr. Johnson, a clerk, then in his office, was known as Michael Straghan. He must possess some strong hold upon him, or surely he would never for an instant have countenanced an engagement between his daughter and a former subordinate."

The pleader's eyes gleamed, and he passed his hand rapidly across his mouth to conceal the satisfaction he felt.

There is no doubt that men often take delight in the misfortunes of a friend, and if so, how much more in the threatened disgrace of anyone who has always held aloof, disdaining even to dislike those they would regard it too much condescension to notice?

Again and again Mr. de Souza had attempted to cross the social gulf that divided him from the Commissioner, and had only been met by a coolness that arose as much from indifference as scorn of his pretensions.

Once he had even managed to gain an introduction to Lady Sherston, and on the strength of this had called; but no notice was taken of his visit, and when subsequently he encountered her in the street, she looked either above or beyond, certainly not at him. Now it seemed a chance had come to repay the insults which had rankled more than any absolute injury, and it was with ill-suppressed eagerness in his tones that he asked quickly, "And you have proofs of what you say? There are not mere surmises?"

"It is all quite true. Two or three know him to be the same man."—She stopped short, remembering that not one of those would testify to what they knew.

Colonel Lea-Cressagh had always been honestly doubtful on the subject; Mrs. Trevor had flatly denied any knowledge if she had had any; while Gerald Sherston had vowed by Winifred's grave, that he would not interfere again one way or the other.

Certainly it was not likely that the Commissioner himself would speak.

"Well?" ejaculated the pleader, impatiently.

"It is no good. Not one of them will say what they know!" she returned, hopelessly.

"Then, my dear madam, your case has not a leg to stand on. It was ridiculous coming to me with a tale so unsupported. You are probably yourself mistaken?"

"Mistaken! Why, he admitted it all to me himself!" with smothered indignation.

"When alone with you, of course?" satirically.

Her silence showed that he had guessed rightly, and after watching her downcast face for a few moments with no sympathy, yet still most fervent admiration in his gaze, he went on with deliberate emphasis,—

"You must be aware that such a confession, unattested by any witnesses, resting entirely on your own word, must be perfectly valueless from a legal point of view; for all that you affirm you do not possess one vestige of proof. There is nothing to show that the whole thing might not be a fabrication, or we will say

an hallucination, an invention of your own brain!"

"I must apologise for trespassing on your time!" said Judith, stiffly, and rose from her seat.

But he stopped her with a gesture.

"Pardon me, if, in endeavouring to prove to you beyond a doubt that any action in this matter would be useless, I have spoken too plainly. I did not mean to offend you, only to make clear what impression your story might make on the minds of most people who heard it!"

"It does not matter!" said Judith, drearily.

"One moment. In saying this I do not by any means wish to infer that I can be of no use to you at all; on the contrary, I think, with my help, you might become the mistress of a considerable sum of money."

"Hush—money I suppose you mean? It is scarcely likely, however, if my story is so utterly unworthy of credit that they would pay me to keep silent, nor would I accept such a compromise for an instant!"

"I see you don't quite follow me. A little patience, and I will explain. I am not unacquainted with the circumstances of your departure from Sir Julius Sherston's roof. I have myself heard the scandals circulated, and believe they could easily be traced to Lady Sherston, and put down to personal malice. I am confident that if there were no witnesses to that meeting with Mr. Johnson, nor any actual proof of an understanding between yourself and old Sir Julius, you might easily obtain a verdict in an action for libel, and heavy damages besides."

Judith's eyes, which at first were all ablaze with scorn, became fixed in an expression of horror as she realised the extent of his effrontery. Even her limbs seemed to become lifeless, and it was with difficulty she reached the door, giving Mr. de Souza time to remark as he opened it,—

"Remember I am not saying that I believe all the stories I have heard against you. Every man has a right to be considered innocent till he has been proved guilty; and much more a woman, when she is young and beautiful like yourself. Think it over, and come to me again, if you entertain my suggestion."

The hand which he had dared in quasi-paternal fashion, to lay upon her shoulder was shaken off so violently as almost to upset his balance; and, breathless in anger, Judith confronted him in an attitude absolutely magnificent in its dignity and grace.

"How dare you, sir, interfere in my private concerns. How dare you propose such a thing to me," she exclaimed, and then, from the very greatness of her wrath, could say no more.

He, too, was white with rage, more at the contempt expressed in her manner than in her words. His face assumed a diabolical look as he bent forward that his answer might carry further, and follow her as she went.

"No concerns of yours are very private, and I might have dared more where others have dared so much."

It was with this sentence ringing in her ears that Judith found herself in the road again, staggering along under a hot sun without an umbrella, the dust, raised by some passing bullock carts, enveloping her like a cloud.

She called out to them to move a little on one side, but the drivers only made a pretence of acceding to her request, and soon relinquished even that; and presently, almost blinded, Judith took to her heels and ran, distancing the long line of them at last, but quite exhausted, and trembling all over when she reached the hotel.

When she entered her own room it was a shock to find another trial to be met. Some one got up quickly from a chair near the window, and came forward to meet her.

It was Mr. Johnson; and for a moment she faced him speechless, while he, too, was mute, conveying her with a rather critical expression.

Standing so at the darkest end of the room, in her black garments, and with that dead

pallor that is sometimes caused by intense heat, she looked almost plain; so weary was she, and so sad.

[For a moment, the man who had never indulged his feelings, never allowed any sentiment to interfere with the one great desire of his life—social success—wondered whether she were worth the sacrifice he proposed to make for her sake; whether he might not one day regret that he had given up ambition, and not even gained love instead.

Was she so very lovely? he asked himself, and almost as though in answer to his unspoken question, she moved past him into the embrasure of the window, where he had been waiting for her the last half-hour.

There the sunshine streamed down upon her head, bringing out all the rich tints of her soft, dark hair, showing up the brilliancy of her bright blue eyes; and, no longer hesitating, he went close up beside her.

"I have been waiting for you nearly an hour," he began, almost savagely.

"Why did you come?" divesting herself quietly of her hat, and drawing off her gloves. "Because I could not stay away. I am mad with love for you. I cannot live without you."

The scornful curl of her upper lip very plainly implied that the matter of his life or death was something to which she was supremely indifferent. She would not even deign to speak.

"I have come again to-day," he went on, "to ask you to reconsider your decision. Give up this unequal struggle, for unequal it must always be, since poverty and beauty are two most dangerous ingredients in a woman's composition. Beauty cannot be hedged round with too many thorns, and you are quite defenceless."

"I have my father!"

"Pshaw! He has not even answered your telegram, urgently as it was worded. He has not the power to help you if he would. Life lately has been very hard for him to live. I have heard from a private source that he has been at times in actual want."

"You know all this. You can tell me so with no more feeling nor remorse than if you were not responsible for all his misery and mine!"

He put her indignation aside, declining to discuss the question she had raised.

"I know, too, that you have been to seek legal advice, legal aid, to-day, and have utterly failed in obtaining any satisfaction. No; I have not been invoking any unseen powers—there has been no magic in the matter. Simply Mrs. Long informed me where you had gone, and your face as you came in betrayed with what result."

"I do not despair!" she interpolated, quickly.

"It was only to be foreseen. Success is impossible. Even though you will not acknowledge yourself beaten, you must admit the truth in your heart. Only by becoming my wife can you reinstate yourself in public opinion!"

Looking out of the window, she turned to cast on him a glance of utter disdain over her shoulder as she answered quietly,—

"I should have thought my last answer to that question was sufficiently explicit!"

"You need not despise an offer it required some generosity to make. Have any of your other admirers come forward?" he asked, tauntingly.

An impatient tapping of her foot on the ground showed that the remark had been heard—had left its sting.

"The story of our innocent embrace has increased so seriously in going its rounds that you would scarcely recognise it. I am not surprised that others hold aloof. Believe me, it is your best chance to become my wife!"

"I will never marry you!" she said, convincingly, so much so that his air of self-confidence and security vanished, and in its stead came a look of desperation, as he convulsively grasped her wrist.

"You do not mean that. You cannot mean

it. You must marry me. What else can you do?" he ejaculated, savagely.

"I will never marry you!" she said again, and faced him boldly.

"Judith, think a moment. I am a bad man, I know, bad all through, but I love you with my whole soul, and to you I will be all that you could desire!"

Quietly but firmly she released herself and turned to go.

"You shall not leave me so!" he whispered, hoarsely. "You shall not, I say! Judith!"

But she was already gone, the skirt of her gown was whirled sharply through the door as it fell to behind her. He was left alone to meditate over the fatality of all scheming where women were concerned, since they can never be depended on in any crisis, and it is quite impossible to anticipate their actions.

What he had done might have been left undone for all the success he had obtained. It gave him very little satisfaction to remember he had acted partly in self-defence, since the only stakes he had cared to win were lost, and lost beyond all hope.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DAWN.

It was like a breath of fresh air, a gleam of blessed sunshine, after travelling through a dark and gloomy tunnel, when the next afternoon, as Judith was sitting alone in her room, depressed with a night and morning of intense distress, and hopeless almost to despair, Mrs. Trevor was ushered in, trim and smiling in the prettiest of cotton costumes, and a broad white hat that shaded her face but could not quite hide the traces of violet powder, or some less innocuous preparation.

Judith met her with outstretched hands, and eyes aglow with pleasure.

"This is good of you to come and see me," she cried, gratefully.

Mrs. Trevor stood on tip-toe to administer a bird-like salute.

"My dear, I'd far rather you abused my head off than praised me when I don't deserve it. I ought to have come to you long ago."

"You have come now, and I am very glad."

"Even now," she admitted, penitently, "I have not come entirely of my own accord. It was suggested to me by some one else."

"By whom?" asked Judith.

"It was Sir Julius who told me that you were alone, and, he thought, in need of help; but before that I had been thinking of you, wondering what you were doing, and meaning every day to go and see. Now I am here I feel a perfect brute not to have been before."

"Don't mind; if you knew how nice it is to see one friendly face at last."

"I am not the only one who has been, surely?"

A sad little nod of the head was the sole reply. Judith's heart being too full then for speech.

All the courage which had borne her through so many trying scenes, evaporated at this first touch of sympathy, and presently she found herself sobbing like a child in Mrs. Trevor's arms, that lady crying too with a noble disregard of the havoc she was making of her careful get-up.

"Do you mean to say that wretch St. Quentin even never came?" she managed to ask by-and-bye.

And then when she received a faint denial she burst into quite a storm of invectives against him.

"She had always known him to be a shallow, empty-headed fop, caring for no one but himself, as weak as water, and fickle too, never knowing his own mind for an hour together. Handsome he was, of course, but in a womanish way that she considered worse than actual plainness, and with no character in his face, no heart in his expression. Ever since she had come to years of discretion she had distrusted men with absolutely regular

features," she concluded, "and now she knew how right she had been—"

Judith was forced to smile at the peroration, and observed a little tearfully that she had not expected him to come, that she had sent him away of her own free will long ago.

"Then, my dear, he ought to have come back, and tried his luck again when you were in trouble. I have no patience with such fair-weather lovers; and he is despicable in the extreme. He is tied to Mrs. Hare's apron-strings again, more securely than before, and she leads him about in triumph; and I dare say makes much of him to prevent him ever wishing to go back to you. Lady Shenston and she have been spreading all sorts of reports."

"I know," said Judith, with quivering lips. "But I never believed them. At least," she corrected herself, candidly, for it was a vague jealousy caused by what she had heard about Sir Julius had really prevented her coming before—"I never for a moment credited that you had been spooning that horrid T. G.; trying to get him away from Winifred, as they said. It was too unlikely. You, who might marry any one!"

"And will marry no one!" sighing. "Jeh! That's all nonsense! I am going up to Simla next week, and mean to take you with me; and you are going to make a tremendous sensation, and marry a member of council, and live happy ever after. Now, don't look so obstinate, child; I will take no refusal. Why should I not have a companion as well as anybody else?"

"You are the dearest, kindest woman in the world! but—"

"Also the least vain. It is not everybody, Miss Judith, would care to play second fiddle to a professional beauty like yourself!" with a merry laugh.

Her hand was taken and caressed affectionately.

"You may make light of it if you please, but I know all the kindness it implies, and love you dearly for it, and thank you! I have telegraphed home, and when I get an answer I will let you know what my plans must be. In the meantime—"

"In the meantime you are coming home with me. Your room is ready, and I have ordered the cosiest little dinner for two. All sweets and tasties! You can't resist that, can you?"

Judith hesitated, and coloured painfully when at last she answered, in a low voice,—

"I am not sure they will let me leave here. You see, I owe some money, and until I get a remittance from England, they may consider me in pawn."

Mrs. Trevor drew out a small pocket-book, and thrust it into the girl's hand, closing her reluctant fingers over it determinedly.

"You must pledge yourself to me instead; and I promise not to be a hard creditor. How proud you are! I believe it hurts you to be under an obligation; but it need not be a gift unless you like. You can pay it back to-morrow, or a year hence!"

With some difficulty she won Judith to consent, and felt some shame at taking thanks which were not due to herself. It was the Commissioner who had asked her to do so much for the sake of old times, and had supplied her with the necessary funds, binding her over to strictest secrecy on the subject, lest Johnson might hear of his action, and punish him effectually for thwarting his plans. It was well she had not mentioned Sir Julius's name, for Judith would certainly have accepted no help from him, but felt less unwillingness to be indebted to a woman.

She had always understood that the Trevors were badly off, but was too unacquainted with the relative stages of poverty to be surprised at the large amount in the pocket book that was given to her. She took from it a sufficient sum, settled with Mrs. Long, and had even made her boxes all ready to go, when another objection occurred to her.

(To be continued.)

WE ARE BROTHERS.

—o—

I.

We are brothers, brothers three,
Reared in one sweet household nest;
Jamie early went to sea;
Hal went East, and I went West;
But when Christmas time draws near
Still we write to one another,—
"Oh, remember now, my brother,
We'd one father and one mother!"

II.

Jamie's tossed from port to port;
He has many a charge to keep—
Charge of precious life and treasure
Safe to carry o'er the deep;
Weeks and months go by in silence,
But when Christmas time draws near,
Then he writes,—"Remember, brother,
We'd one father and one mother."

III.

Hal is deep in politics,
For he always likes to lead;
Hal, too, is a busy lawyer,
And has many a case to plead.
He has growing sons and daughters;
But when Christmas time draws near,
He remembers to write,—"Brother,
We'd one father and one mother."

IV.

I'm a busy, restless man;
I have many a plan and care;
But this mighty brother-bond
Tugs my heart strings unaware;
Makes me think of Hal and Jamie
With a strong and tender love;
Makes me write to each,—"Oh, brother,
We'd one father and one mother."

V.

"We'd one father and one mother!"
That's the tie in loss or grief,
Which, however far we're parted,
Brings the sad one sure relief.
That's the tie, in joy or honour,
Thrills three hearts alike with pride,
As we, smiling, tell each other,—
"We'd one father and one mother."

L. E. B.

GERDA'S SACRIFICE.

—o—

CHAPTER X.

HARRY BRADLEY HAD KNOWN bitter poverty. Before he left England he had often had scanty meals that there might be the more for his wife and child; but never in his whole life had he seen such a poverty-stricken room as the wretched attic in the little by-street off the Tottenham-court-road.

It was the hopelessness of the place which impressed him most. It was not dirty or unsafe, or even untidy; there was a management about its details which showed it not to be just a passing refuge hired at so much a night, but literally a place where people lived—Heaven save the mark, simply existed would be nearer the truth!—week in and week out!

The floor was clean; there was a narrow gauze blind in the window, as though to shut out all entrance for the sun if he should ever take it into his head to wish to enter. A frying-pan and tin kettle were in the grate; but, bitterly cold as was that December day, there was no fire; there had evidently been none for several days.

All was tidy but the rickety chair, the deal table, and the pallet-bed belonged to the house, and were hired with the room.

Mr. Bradley felt positive that the girl who stood there with the fatal draught in her hand possessed nothing in the world but the clothes she wore.

All this came on him in an instant. As he

entered the room he seemed to take in the situation at one glance, and he laid one hand on the girl's arm, and wrested the poison from her grasp, then he threw open wide the window, and poured the mixture on to the leads of the nearest house. Not till then did the creature, whose design he had intercepted, find her voice.

"Why did you do it?" she said to him in a voice full of pathetic reproach, "it was all I had!"

She looked a child, save for those lines, not of time's writing, on her brow—a simple child, and yet she had courted death! Fair, gentle, and pure, to judge, at least, from her face. What misery could have driven her to such a sin?

"My poor child!" and the man's voice broke with strong emotion, "you can't be in your right senses! I was in the chemist's shop, and I followed you home. I seemed to feel what you were going to do!"

She did not look in the least grateful for his foresight.

"It was all there was left!" she murmured. "I had no money. I bought the stuff with my last pence."

"And why?"

She never attempted to resent the question.

"Because there is no place for me in the wide, wide world!"

"Hush!"

"It is quite true. I lost my mother now six weeks ago, and it is not half that time since my father died. I came to London to earn my living. I was young and strong, and not afraid of work; but it was no use, no one would see me! I was homeless. The woman downstairs will turn me into the streets to-morrow, and—" here she shivered as though stricken by some awful memory. "I know there are worse things than hunger and cold. It seemed to me less sinful to go to my mother than to become such as she would have been to see me!"

Every fibre of the man's heart was stirred within him.

He had wrapped himself in his own grief, had proclaimed that no sorrow was like unto his; while he had health and strength, riches, and a loving child, and, meanwhile, this girl had nothing!

"I understand," he said, and the very tone of his voice was full of comfort. "I have a little girl, and, if I had died poor, she might be placed as you are. But you must not think of death!"

The girl raised her eyes to his face—soft, clear, dovelike eyes of dark, expressive blue. She clasped her thin hands together, and said, simply,—

"Don't be kind to me, sir. Anger, indifference, scorn—I have born them all without flinching, but I think a kind word would break me down!"

"What is your name?"

The question brought the colour like a warm flood across her thin, white cheeks.

Hal understood. He had touched a painful subject.

"Forgive me!" he said, gently.

"Nay; it is only it recalled the past to me. My name is Mary—Mary March."

"And you have no relations, no uncle or aunt, no brother or sister?"

"I am alone in the world!"

"You must let me help you. I have known sorrow too. Only a little while ago I thought poverty was the worst of trials; but I made my fortune abroad, and came home too late. My little child was motherless. My wife had gone to a fairer home than any I could win for her!"

Miss March looked at him with wistful eyes.

"You speak kindly!" she said, slowly.

"But, oh! I wish you had not met me! It would have been all over now!"

"You foolish girl!" said Mr. Bradley, in an authoritative tone. "It is wicked to talk like that! Where are the children who will want your teaching to go to for an instructress if you persist in dying?"

She sighed.
"No one will ever let me teach their children!" she answered. "Their first question is always what references I can offer."

"Well?"

"And I have none!"

Hal's face changed. The girl who watched him closely understood.

"You see how it is," she murmured. "I never injured anyone in my life! I never did an action I would blush to tell you; but I have 'no references,' and so I am a sinner! Mothers shake their heads at me and say I am not fit to teach their children!"

"You shall teach mine on one condition!"

"What is it?"

"You said a while ago you would rather die than live to become what your mother would have regretted. You shall teach my child if you promise me she shall learn nothing from you that could unfit her for a meeting with her mother."

"I promise."

"You said just now there had been sore trouble in your life. Tell me, had it anything to do with love?"

She shook her head.

"I never had time to think of love! Until my mother's death I was too happy. I never wanted any affection, any society, but hers!"

"I believe you; and now, Miss March, you must come with me."

The girl looked troubled, Hal understood.

"I am forgetting I am a stranger, and you may not like to trust yourself with me. I have no house of my own at present. It is not a fortnight since I returned from Africa. I am living now at the house of my wife's old nurse until I can make a home for my child. She is a good woman, and will take care of you. I could not leave you here!" and he glanced round the room, "the very look of these bare walls is enough to drive you melancholy mad! If you have any objection to return with me, I will give you Mrs. Johnson's address, and you shall go to Camberwell alone!"

"I would rather go with you," she said, simply.

"Then we will start at once."

He went downstairs, paid the rent, gave the landlady a trifle over, and asked her to send for a cab, then he handed in Miss March as courteously as though she had been a princess, and gave the address, Drogheda Villa, Hamwynd-road.

He was perfectly silent on the journey, only when the cab stopped, he opened the door with a latch-key, and led Miss March into a cosy parlour where the table was already laid for tea.

"Sit down here, I will not be gone long."

Mrs. Johnson was busy in her own room putting on her best cap. She came bustling down, and Hal caught her hand and drew her into the kitchen.

"Martha, I want you to do me a favour."

She said afterwards it was the first time she had seen him smile since his wife's death.

"Surely, Master Hal, there's nothing in the world I wouldn't do for you!"

"Martha, I found a poor young girl in London on the verge of starvation! She was buying a packet of poison for rats and other useless vermin! Poor child, I suppose she classed herself as useless! I tracked her home. If I had been ten minutes later all would have been over!"

"Bless my heart, sir, and what did you do?"

"I heard her story, that she was an orphan and alone in the world, and then I brought her here."

"But what are we to do with her, sir?"

"Feed her up; she looks like a skeleton. I told her she should teach Blanche; but, Martha, if I had had no child, I must have brought her here. Her face would have haunted me night and day had I left her in that wretched garret!"

"I'll be good to her, sir, never fear. You always had a feeling heart, Master Hal!"

He sighed.

"How Katy would have pitied her, and what care she would have taken of her!"

Mrs. Johnson made no reply, her own opinion being that the late Mrs. Bradley rarely devoted care or pity to any person save one—herself!

Mrs. Johnson had known the Bradleys, husband and wife, from infancy. Katy was her nursing, but the love of her heart had always been Hal's. She would have defended Miss Kathleen from blame with her last breath; but she would never have spoken of her with the loving pride which always came to her voice when she uttered Hal's name.

"She's a lady, Martha!" explained Mr. Bradley. "You mustn't let her think herself in the way or anything. Tell her she shall pay us back by teaching Blanche, as soon as ever she is strong and well."

"All right, sir! You're never going out again?" for Mr. Bradley had taken his hat and coat.

"I must; this business made me neglect my own. I have never called on that man I went to town on purpose to see."

"You're never going to London again at this time of night, sir?"

"I shall be there by seven. I told him I'd call after five, so that it won't be so very much out of date! Martha, be good to that poor girl!"

Martha was disposed to be specially good. She was one of those large-hearted women who always have a tenderness for waifs and strays. You must know these women, reader. Thank Heaven we all meet them sometimes—women who may never have owned a child, who may indeed be spinsters, but yet who have the true mother-heart—who cannot see any human creature in pain or suffering without taking the afflicted one to their love and cherishing it.

The street door closed on Hal. The old servant went into the parlour, and this is what she saw: the room looked the picture of comfort, the red curtains were drawn, the lamp burnt on the table, and the fire gave a cheerful blaze. But Martha's eyes went straight to the old black horsehair chair nearest the hearth. In it sat, or rather reclined, a young girl, whose face was almost waxen in its colourless purity; her plain black dress and hat were what a lady would wear, and yet Mrs. Johnson knew the wanderer had been face to face with hunger. She was so thin that her clothes hung loosely on her, and the fingers, which clutched nervously at the arms of the chair, were little but skin and bone. If Martha had cherished any doubts of her unexpected guest they faded now.

"My dear young lady," she said, with a strange mixture of kindness and respect, "you must just wake up and take some food; you're looking pretty well tired out."

But the girl neither spoke nor moved. Those clear eyes were firmly closed, and their long, dark lashes fell over the alabaster white skin, making her look even more delicate than Martha had discerned.

The old woman felt her hands; they were cold as ice. Martha calmly took some brandy from the sideboard and poured a few drops between the tightly-clenched teeth. The girl stirred uneasily. More brandy, and a faint tinge of colour came back to her cheeks.

"Oh! sir," she murmured, evidently thinking herself still in her wretched attic—"Oh! sir, let me die! Death is merciful to the poor, and a grave is all I shall need then from strangers' charity."

"Nonsense," said Martha sharply, though the tears rolled down her cheeks. "You are not going to die yet. Wake up, missie, and take some food."

Miss March looked into the old woman's face.

"Are you an angel?"

"An angel?" repeated Martha, half scared. "No. Whatever makes you think of such a thing? Angels have wings, my dear young lady; they don't go about in linsey gowns and caps."

"You were so kind," whispered Miss March, "and it is all so bright and pretty."

The words were the surest passport to Martha's heart. Praise of Drogheda Villa was always sweet to its owner's ears.

"It's but a small place, missie, but my own, and I've had some happy days here. Mr. Bradley is staying with me now; it was he who brought you here."

"I remember," said the girl, faintly, as a thrill of horror passed over her at the thought of how the gentleman had found her. "Did he tell you?"

"He said he feared you'd found this world of ours a hard place to struggle in, missie, and he asked me to do my best to make you well and strong again."

"Oh! I am quite well, only tired and sad."

"It looks like it," said Martha, grimly, when the young stranger had essayed to walk across the room and would have fallen but for a supporting hand; "but I've nursed many a person back to health, and I reckon I can do the same for you."

Mary March took the horny, work-stained hand in hers and kissed it.

"How good you are to me," she whispered, and the tears brimmed over in her blue grey eyes.

"Not a bit of it," said her hostess, blithely.

"Now, my dear, don't cry. I never could bear to see anyone cry, and I like to keep things as cheerful as I can just now, because of Mr. Hal."

"He looks sad."

"And he is, poor dear; it's not a month yet, you see, missie, since he came home to England to hear of his wife's death."

"How he must have loved her."

"Ay. Now I'm not going to speak another word until I've seen you have your tea." And the kind old woman drew her guest's chair to the table and placed delicate slices of ham and chicken on her plate, and cut dainty home-made bread from a new baked loaf.

Mary March tried to obey; but it was so long since she had tasted food that it almost choked her; perhaps Mrs. Johnson understood. Anyway, her tears dropped plentifully over her own plate, and, when the meal was over, she felt as if this sad, motherless young stranger had somehow become part and parcel of Drogheda Villa.

"You must go to bed early," she said, when the cloth had been removed. "Why, my dear, you'll feel a different creature by the morning."

"I think I do now," whispered the stranger. Oh! Mrs. Johnson, how can you be kind to me when I have been so wicked?"

"It seems to me, my dear, you've had such a lack of kindness lately that you want an extra lot of it now, just to keep the balance even."

She helped the girl to undress, and herself tucked her up in her little white bed; then she came downstairs, and sat by the chimney-corner, to wait for her boy.

He was very late. It was ten o'clock, or turned, before she heard his step; then he came in weary and dispirited.

"It's no use, Martha," he said, when he had sat down on the sofa, and began to warm his hands at the fire; "even Detective Pearson declares Miss Lestranger must have left England."

Mrs. Johnson looked at him, pityingly, and then, as one distrusting her own advice, suggested—

"Master Hal, wouldn't it be as well if you gave up looking for that lady?"

"Why?" exclaimed the young man. "Don't you see it is my one chance of hearing of my wife's last hours? My Katy's last words, her dying smile, were all for Miss Lestranger."

Mrs. Johnson seemed turning something over in her mind.

"It's seldom people disappear all on a sudden like that, Master Hal, without there's meaning in it."

"Meaning!"

"I'm a thinking maybe, sir, the reason you

have such a difficulty in finding this lady is that she's no mind to be found."

"Nonsense!"

It's kind of strange, seeing she was with Mrs. Bradley at the last; knowing, as she must have known, the poor dear's friends would want to hear all they could hear. I say, taking all this into consideration, it's kind of strange, Master Hal, she left no address."

"It is not strange at all," he repeated, angrily. "Don't you see, the thing's as plain as daylight. Miss LeStrange was young and pretty; she was on the point of marriage with a man, presumably, far above her in rank. It was natural enough she should wish to break off all connection with her past life, and leave no clue by which she could be traced!"

"Then, if that's the case, Master Hal, the more's the pity, asking your pardon, you should be so set on finding her."

"I want to hear about Katy."

"It couldn't bring her back again."

"And I want to trace who it was committed that cruel deception, and made my darling think she was a widow."

"It's all lost labour, Master Hal; can it bring her back again? Can it spare you one pang of grief?"

"It would be a satisfaction."

"The past is past," urged Mrs. Johnson. "You loved Miss Katy dearly, and you've lost her; it will but bring back all your sorrow to hear how and where she died. It seems to me the bravest thing would be to bear your loss and devote yourself to the child."

"Blanche is a mere baby."

"She is all that is left you of your wife; and you are all she has to look to, poor darling."

Hal heaved a sigh.

"I suppose I'm an unnatural father, though Heaven knows I love my child, yet I'd give her life gladly just to recall her mother."

Mrs. Johnson glared at him.

"It seems to me, Master Hal, your wits have just gone wool-gathering."

And so firmly did she believe it that that very night she indited a laboured epistle to Miss Morton, begging her to come to London and see after her nephew, "for," wrote the kind-hearted widow, "grief and distress for this lady is just turning his brain."

The appeal was not fruitless; the day after it was posted a sweet-faced, elderly lady, in black silk and furs, came to Drogheda Villa and asked for Mr. Bradley.

"Aunt Constance!"

"You must come straight home with me," said Miss Morton; "my poor boy, you look quite worn out. By-gones shall be forgotten, and you and I and little Blanche will be happy together."

Hal shook his head.

"I will come gladly, aunt, and see my darling, but I cannot stay. I shall never rest until I discover Miss LeStrange."

The spinster threw up her hands.

"My dear Hal, what can she tell you that you do not know already?"

"At least she can tell me where my darling rests, can name the place where all that is mortal of my Kathleen was laid."

"Hal, you are the most devoted husband I ever encountered."

He sighed.

"You see I loved her always. We were boy and girl together. I don't believe after I was old enough to think at all there was ever a day in which I did not picture Kathleen to myself as my wife."

Miss Morton was touched.

"I see what it is. You may leave me Blanche, but you, yourself, will go roaming through the world until you find this actress who has disappeared so mysteriously."

"Even so."

"You leave me a heavy responsibility. I am growing an old woman, too old to have the sole care of a little child."

"I have found someone to relieve you of a little of that care," returned Mr. Bradley.

"I have met a young lady who seems to me out out for a governess."

Hal hesitated.

"She wants a situation badly, and she is a lady. One couldn't offer her money. I declare I was quite relieved when I thought of asking her to be Blanche's governess."

"What is her name?"

"Mary March."

"I should like to see her. You had better give me her address."

"Oh! she is staying here."

"Staying here!" in a tone of very marked disapproval.

"Certainly. Is there any harm in it?"

"Hal, will you never remember the consequences?"

"I never thought of them," he answered.

"How could I fancy people would think evil of me when my whole heart lies buried in Kathleen's unknown grave?"

Miss Morton relented.

"I will see her."

"Sure ma'am, she has a sweet face," said Mrs. Johnson, when appealed to; "and she's a lady born and bred. 'Deed, she'd be a treasure to any family."

Miss Morton found the treasure laboriously making a black dress. The old lady's face softened strangely as she met the gaze of those blue grey eyes.

"You remind me of my dearest friend," she said, simply. "Irene Grey and I were able together. She disappeared suddenly from our village, and we never met again, but your face has brought her back to me. It seems but yesterday we kissed and said good-bye."

Miss March seemed thoughtful.

"Madame," she said, slowly, "my mother's name was Irene, and she came from a little village. It was somewhere in Kent. I know she left it quite suddenly. She married unknown to all her friends, and circumstances forced her to leave them in ignorance of her fate."

"It must be the same. Tell me, was she like you?"

"They said so."

"And she is dead?"

"Last November. Oh! Miss Morton, that was the beginning of trouble."

"And your father?"

"He is dead."

"I never knew his name. I guessed Irene left her home to be married, but I never remember hearing of a Mr. March."

"Perhaps you have heard of Guy?"

"Guy! It was her favorite name. I remember her scolding me once for saying Guy and Irene did not sound well together."

"My father's name was Guy."

"I am sure it is the same."

"I think it must be. Do you live in a house called Ivy Lodge, and is your Christian name Constance?"

"Yes, to both questions."

"Then I have heard my mother speak of you often. She used to call you May, from the month in which you were born."

Miss Morton kissed her.

"I was prepared before to second my nephew's plans; now I can do more. Will you come to Ivy Lodge, not as Blanche's governess, but as my guest?"

"I would rather come as Blanche's governess."

"And why?"

"I should be independent."

"Perhaps you are right. But remember I loved your mother as a sister, and look upon me as a friend."

"Thank you."

"What is your name?"

"Mary March."

"Mary, I am surprised! Irene was so fond of fanciful, high-flown names."

Miss March smiled sadly.

"I have another name; one rarely heard in England, and mamma always called me by it; but it is too fanciful for a governess, so I prefer to be plain Mary March."

"You will never be plain, my dear. Don't you know you have the promise of a beautiful womanhood before you? How old are you?"

"Not quite nineteen."

"And you don't know your own beauty?"

"I never thought about it; you see I have had such a busy life."

"Well, you shall have time to think about it now. I don't mean you to be worked to death at Ivy Lodge."

"For answer Mary took the old lady's hand and kissed it, just as if it really seemed to Miss Morton, she were afraid to kiss her face."

"My nephew returns with me to Keston; I should like you to go with us, Mary. I wish Hal himself to introduce you to Blanche."

"I hope she will comfort him; poor man, he seems heartbroken at his wife's loss."

"She was not worth it, dear; if ever woman were unworthy such devotion Kathleen was."

"Wasn't she good?"

"She was very beautiful and very ambitious. Her darling passion was to be rich; strange that she should have died just as my nephew came into his fortune."

"Money can't do everything," said Miss March, sadly. "I think love is better than money."

"Why?" asked the spinster, primly.

"Because it survives sorrow, disappointment, age, and even death. True love survives even the separation of the grave!"

"Hem! you'd better see about packing," said Miss Morton, as she left the room.

CHAPTER XI.

Mr. LESLIE was surprised to find that Lord Castleton broke his appointment. The two men had fixed to meet the morning after the lawyer's arrival, and look into the subject of Reginald's future. They were to inquire into the extent of the English Embassy at Gröningen, and decide whether it was likely Sir James Tracy would accept the services of his young kinsman. Many business letters had to be written, and the promised loan of £1,000 was to be delivered. Considering all these reasons for his presence, it was certainly strange that the morning passed without any sign of Lord Castleton.

The lawyer waited till three o'clock; then he decided he would call upon Lady Tracy himself. He could hint her cousin's trying position more plainly than would be possible to that young nobleman himself, and he was devoted heart and soul to Lord Castleton's interests.

He remembered Amabel as a pretty child; one glance told him she had blossomed into a charming woman. She received him as if they had parted yesterday, exhibited the four children that had come to her in her Indian home, and expatiated on her delight that now her husband was appointed to Gröningen she would not be called upon to part with her darlings.

"Of course, I could not have left their father for them," she said, simply; "but it is an intense relief to us both to feel that there is no need now for separation."

"Gröningen is a most healthy place! I am afraid, though, you will find it a trifle dull."

Lady Tracy laughed.

"I don't think I was ever dull in my life." Then she added, smiling, "but all this time I am dying with curiosity to know what has brought you to Paris!"

"Very painful business."

"Not your own?"

"No; but one whose interests cannot be indifferent to you. I am here on behalf of your cousin Reginald," and then in a few words he laid the case before her.

"Five hundred a year!" gasped Lady Tracy; "why, they cannot live on it."

The lawyer looked at her searchingly.

"And yet I thought I had heard of a certain rising politician, and his charming wife, who were content to begin life on a smaller sum."

She laughed.

"We had only three hundred a year, but



["OH I'M QUITE WELL," MARY SAID, "ONLY TIRED AND SAD."]

then you see we were two romantic young people. I used to declare I could live on bread-and-cheese with Jim, and he had a profound belief that what was barely enough for one would be ample for two."

Her eyes glistened as she spoke; evidently the experiment had succeeded, and the love which had sweetened poverty had not left her in prosperity.

"And aren't the Castletons romantic?"

She answered his question by another.

"Have you ever seen the Countess?"

"Never."

"She wears ball dresses which must have cost at least half her husband's present income; she is the loveliest woman in Paris. How can such a brilliant creature be expected to come down to the prosaic realities of life?"

"Yes! if she loves her husband."

"Even love would not take away all the hardship of the sacrifice. You see she did not choose poverty as I did. She married Rex honestly believing him heir to fifty thousand a year."

"It all depends on her whether his life is wrecked or not; and, in a measure, Lady Tracy, it depends on you."

"On me?"

"Assuredly. Why not persuade Sir James to appoint Lord Castleton to an attachéship?"

Lady Tracy hesitated.

"I don't think it would suit them."

"Why not?"

"Lady Castleton has taken a dislike to me. I don't think she would like a position which would throw us constantly together."

"A dislike to you!" exclaimed Mr. Leslie.

"But why? How could she?"

"I mistook her for a friend of mine."

"A very venial offence."

She sighed.

"I fear the Countess did not think so. Well, Mr. Leslie, I will do my best. I look on Rex almost as a younger brother of my own."

Mr. Leslie thanked her and returned to his quarters, not at the fashionable hotel where

the Castletons were staying, but at a far quieter one, where comfort replaced luxury and show.

The Earl had not called. All the next day Mr. Leslie waited in; all in vain, however. Then, kind-hearted as he was, he grew irate. He had come to Paris entirely on the Earl's account; he was staying there at inconvenience to himself solely to benefit Reginald; he did think he might have been treated a little more courteously.

"I will wait until to-morrow," he decided, "and then call and insist upon an explanation. I have spent two whole days waiting for his lordship, and I won't be played the fool with any longer!"

Directly after breakfast next morning, he repaired to Reginald's hotel. An English waiter came forward.

"Can I see Lord Castleton?"

"I am very sorry, sir, his lordship and the Countess left last night."

"Last night!" ejaculated the surprised lawyer. "Where on earth have they gone to? I had an appointment with Lord Castleton on particular business!"

"I believe they went to England. There were some letters left which we were to post this morning; perhaps one of them is intended for you, if I might ask your name, sir?"

"Thomas Leslie."

The waiter disappeared, but soon came back with a letter in his hand. The lawyer felt in such a rage that he could not wait to read it, but tore the envelope open in the street.

"DEAR MR. LESLIE.—Upon mature consideration, I have decided upon a totally different course to that advised by yourself. I am quite sure your kindness is such that you will take no offence at this step. I am glad to say I shall not now need to accept your generous loan. With best regards, yours truly,

"CASTLETON."

That was all!

Actually Rex treated the man who had

travelled all those miles to serve him as cavalierly as a mere acquaintance. He did not even condescend to inform the lawyer of his plans; he never even mentioned where he was going. Mr. Leslie was not prone to take umbrage, but even he felt incensed now.

"I've done with him!" muttered the old man. "He's the last of the family, but I wash my hands of him. To be treated like this; well! What can he be going to do? Doesn't want my loan, eh! Has left Paris! Why, he told me he hadn't money enough to pay his hotel bill; someone must have opened their purse to him—who?"

Mr. Leslie passed the Maraballs' house at this point, and turned in, hoping Lady Tracy might throw some light upon her cousin's behaviour; but Amabel's first question showed him this was fruitless.

"What has become of Reginald? My husband has just been to call on him and heard he had left Paris."

"That is quite true."

"But where has he gone? What does he mean to do?"

"I have no idea. He has discarded my offers of advice, and tells me he means to follow some plan of his own."

Amabel trembled.

"He will be ruined!" she said, in a whisper.

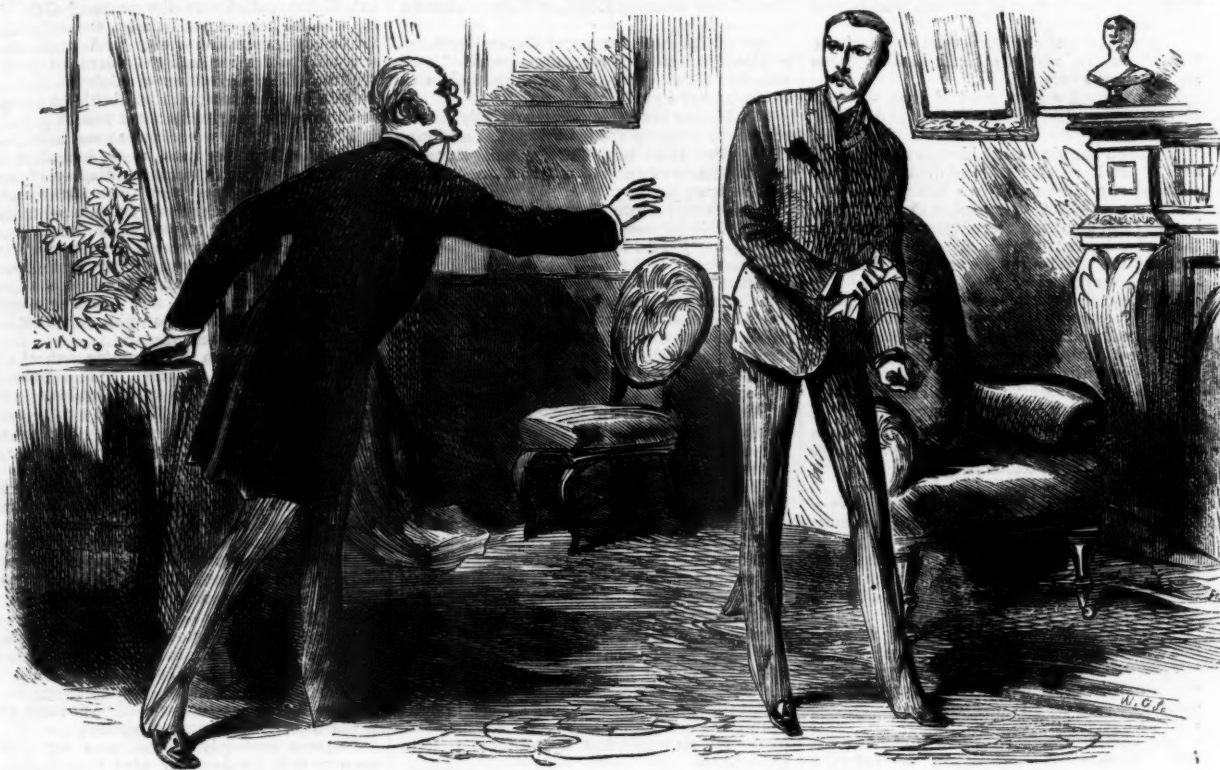
"Don't you see who influences him, Mr. Leslie? It is his wife. The Countess has laughed at your notions of economy and hard work; she means Rex to find an easier road to fortune!"

"But how?" asked the bewildered Mr. Leslie. "She wouldn't take him off to the Australian gold diggings, or the diamond mines of South Africa! I don't see where she could send him to get money!"

Lady Tracy smiled sadly, but there were tears in her eyes as she answered,—

"If it is as I fear, they will regret it all their days. I think she has sent him—to the Jews!"

(To be continued.)



[GABRIEL DETERMINES TO SEARCH FOR EDITH.]

NOVELLETTE.]

UNCLE RICHARD'S MONEY.

—101—

CHAPTER I.

EDITH had no great desire to see the Thorne's. She simply accepted the invitation because they had invited her, and she had nowhere else to go now that her uncle was dead.

He had never been very kind to her during his life, but still she missed him just a little, as she would have missed some old landmark, such as an old house, or some ancient tree she had often gazed upon.

She had eaten at the same table with him, and had sat in the same pew; consequently, when she went to breakfast, dinner, or tea, or to church, she was conscious of his absence.

It was not that Edith was hard-hearted in any way, although the old man had tried to make her so; but it is seldom that a man who behaved in the manner Richard Thorne had ever wins the love of anyone.

He had clearly shown by every action of his life that he neither cared nor wished for sympathy; so no one shared in his joys, if he had any, or his sorrows, if he knew what sorrow meant.

Richard Thorne put one in mind of some old house that had been allowed to pass into decay. He had neglected to cultivate his mind, or to allow the light of charity to enter into his soul, till at length a sort of withering dry-rot had taken possession of his heart; and his unwholesome life was not regretted when it passed away.

Richard Thorne had been an ill-natured man all his life, so it was natural that he should have made an eccentric and ill-natured will.

He had only done what was expected of him, so no one was surprised, and to most people it was a more reasonable document

than had been anticipated, for the property was left to his niece, Edith, and Gabriel, on the condition they married. The one who refused to carry out his wishes was to forfeit everything.

Richard Thorne knew very well that Gabriel had engaged himself to someone before he left for the wars. But this only made the miserable old fellow more determined that the young man should marry Edith.

The mere fact that Gabriel did not desire to do so had induced the old man to leave his money in this way.

It would have been so easy to have divided his property between Edith and Gabriel, leaving them to do as they liked.

Edith had found one advantage in living under Richard's roof. The place was so dull that she had many opportunities of improving her mind.

She could speak many languages, and was altogether a most cultivated young lady.

Of course, Edith was highly indignant when she heard the will read, and she determined to show Gabriel, when she met him, what she thought of the matter.

The brilliant idea had occurred to her to make herself as disagreeable to Gabriel as possible, so as to force him to refuse to marry her.

Edith was a dark, handsome girl, with large flashing black eyes, and a very quick temper of her own.

Her quick, impulsive temper was not her only fault, for she had a provoking way with her that made others lose their temper too.

What kind of girl she would have been if Mr. Richard Thorne had not brought her up we cannot tell, but we think we are justified in saying that he had succeeded in spoiling the girl's character.

When a child he had done all in his power to break her in, as he called it; and the result of this had been that she had grown obstinate and resentful.

One of the punishments that Mr. Richard Thorne often inflicted upon his niece when she disobeyed and defied him was to carry her up to a dismal garret on top of the large house and lock her in.

Many bitter tears had the girl shed in that lonely chamber. Many times had she struck the thick door with her little clenched fist, and shrieked until exhausted.

She had a horror of the place, and would watch the advance of darkness with the utmost dread, conjuring up horrible unrealities in her childish terror. But never once did she give in, although he tried to tame her as wild beasts are tamed, by keeping her on a short allowance of food.

It is doubtful if Mr. Richard Thorne would have liked Edith half so much if she had been soft, shy, and yielding.

He could not help admiring a girl who had such a strong, indomitable will, who had never once stooped to ask for forgiveness at his hands, no master what chastisement she received.

Kindness had never yet been tried with her, and the girl had grown up bold and self-reliant.

Mr. Richard Thorne had often expressed his opinion that she would come to a very bad end, and she had often retorted that she did not care if she did; and he admired her all the more for her fierce defiance of him.

Then there came a time when she was too big to be carried up to the garret, and Richard Thorne had to content himself by scolding her.

One day, when the girl was fourteen years of age, he had boxed her ears, and she had taken up the inkstand and threw it at his head.

He had never laid a hand upon her since; but the inkstains remain on the wall of the house until this day.

Edith read many novels, but the love parts she could not get on with, for it seemed such

a lot of nonsense to her, for she was not at all a sentimental girl.

The stories that she liked were those of life and adventure, and she would devour these kind of books very eagerly.

The girls and women she had met she had no sympathy with, and she did not understand them.

It was on her nineteenth birthday that Edith arrived at Berner's End, and drove down the wide, sleepy High-street in a hired vehicle.

There was a dull, threatening sky overhead, but no rain, although there were many indications of the recent storm. The signpost of the "Blue Lion" had been blown down, and the road was very muddy.

The town was considered to be a picturesque one, for there were wooden houses with colonnades, and the ivy-covered church was over so many years old, but on that particular day the place looked dismal.

"Miserable hole!" thought Edith, with a curl of her lip. "I would sooner die at once than remain here all my life! No theatres, no concert-halls, or anything lively! I have lived in a monotonous way, and want a change!"

It is a curious thing that the young have a habit of wishing themselves dead on the most slender provocation; but the older a person gets the more rare life-expression is heard to pass their lips. Perhaps people are afraid that King Death will take them at their word.

Young Mr. Bartley, grocer and provision merchant, was standing at his door in the whitest of aprons, and he looked at the cab curiously as it went by, and wondered indolently where the girl was going to, and where she came from.

His curiosity was soon gratified, for the dirty white horse was pulled up before a weatherbeaten, red-brick house, on the door of which was a brass plate.

"It's Mr. Thorne's niece," observed the young grocer; and, having solved the mystery, retired into his shop with a look of great satisfaction on his good-tempered face.

Before the cabman had descended from his perch and knocked at the brightly-varnished door it was opened, and Edith entered the house with an almost disdainful smile.

There was a great deal of bustle and excitement on Edith's arrival.

Mrs. Thorne was touchingly demonstrative, and kissed Edith again and again. Mr. Thorne was very differential, and his two sons seemed delighted to see their cousin.

May was the only one who showed no enthusiasm in the matter, and Edith liked her all the better for it.

"She, at all events, is not a hypocrite!" thought Edith, who had a very suspicious mind.

Edith was worldly-wise enough to know that if she had presented herself at the lawyer's house without any money, she would not have had such a pleasant reception; for, to tell the truth, everyone overacted their part.

Edith was given the most comfortable chair in the room, which she accepted as a matter of course, for the girl had a keen appreciation of her own ease and comfort, and a selfish disregard for other people.

May looked at her kindly as she reclined in the easy chair, one soft, brown arm supporting her dark, shapely head.

"My cousin Edith is both conceited and selfish," May told herself, "and looks down upon us all. I wish my father and mother would not make themselves so humble before this girl. She is probably laughing at them in her sleeve!"

Mrs. Thorne insisted upon Edith putting on a pair of slippers, for her feet must be damp, and warmed them with her own hands.

And the girl allowed herself to be petted, and smiled at them in all derision; and her cool insolence brought a flash of annoyance to May's face.

She felt ashamed of her father, ashamed of her mother, ashamed of them all; for why

should they worship Edith as if she was some superior being?

It hurt May's fine sense of dignity to see her relations stooping so low; and the worst of it all was that Edith knew very well their object in receiving her so tenderly.

Mr. Thorne rang the bell impatiently for the servant to bring up the tea-things, for no doubt Edith was tired and thirsty, and there is nothing like a cup of tea to revive one after a long railway journey.

"There will be no chance for poor Isidore when Gabriel sees Edith," thought May, feeling angry with her cousin for being so very handsome.

Edith could not exactly be called beautiful, but there was a charm about her that made a great impression on all with whom she came in contact—a witchery in a glance from those liquid eyes, an almost irresistible temptation in those coral lips, a fascination in manner that few could resist.

The girl knew very well how attractive she was, and in her youthful vanity thought herself a thousand times more fascinating than she really was.

Edith was neither too tall or too slim, and her waist was not at all tightened in.

Undoubtedly the girl was vain—vain of the beautiful glowing colour in her cheeks, so startling in contrast to her broad, white, intellectual brow, proud of her little hands and feet; but she had too great a regard to her own health and personal comfort to wear tight stays or boots.

She had never taken the trouble to hide the selfishness of her nature, and she had never yet curbed her fierce, fiery temper, and she had fully made up her mind that Gabriel should see her at her worst. If he dared to marry her he would find her a most untamable shrew.

Her cousin Jack handed her a cup of tea, and she took it as she might have taken it from a waiter. No one was astonished at her behaviour, for she had a cool way with her which was quite edifying to see. If it was not insolence and pride at all events it was something very near it; but no one resented her conduct in any way, and Edith did not care a snap of the fingers for their opinion.

She felt fairly good-tempered as she sat by the fire, sipping her tea, scarcely deigning to answer the many questions that were put to her.

"Oh, these tiresome people, will they never cease chattering?" she thought. "Can't they see plainly enough that I am bored to death?"

Edith was like a sleek pretty kitten, very playful at times, but ever ready to show her claws at the least provocation.

"What time did you start this morning?" asked Mr. Thorne with anxious solicitude.

"Ten o'clock," replied Edith, with a long-drawn yawn, that showed her gleaming white teeth. "What slow trains you have here, they never go beyond twenty miles an hour!"

"You found the town very picturesque?" said Mr. Thorne. "Doubtless you observed the colonnade and the ivy clad church? I daresay it struck you as very pretty?"

"Pretty?" said Edith, speaking louder than she had spoken before. "I call it a horrid place! Surely you would not remain here, unless compelled by circumstances over which you have no control?"

"Like most young people you are fond of change," ventured Mr. Thorne, for he had his doubts how Edith would take this remark.

"I have no desire to dream away my life in a sleepy old town," said Edith, and then there came a loud knock at the front door. Edith was looking towards May, and saw her start and change colour.

"Her sweetheart, I suppose," thought Edith, "an awful awkward fellow who has never been beyond Berner's End in his life."

But Edith was wrong for once, sagacious and far-seeing as she usually was; for there was a firm footstep in the hall, a manly voice, and when the parlour door was open, everyone

but Edith called out the name of Gabriel. He was the hero of the family, the only one for many generations who had made the army his profession, and they were all proud of him. Their greeting of Gabriel was as natural as their reception of Edith had been artificial, and the girl detected this at once.

Edith was really curious to see Gabriel—the man whom her dead uncle had desired her to marry. She made no display of her feelings, for her eyes were turned resolutely towards the fire. Certainly he had one of the richest, pleasantest voices that Edith had ever heard, and there was a genuine ring in his laughter that showed that it came from the heart. His voice had made just a slight impression upon Edith, and she was afraid that whether eyes fell upon him this favourable idea of him would vanish.

"Why, Jack, you have grown out of all knowledge!" said Gabriel. "I declare I should not have known you if I had met you in the street. Hello, May, my blue eyed sister! What have you been doing all the time I have been away? How many sweethearts have you got?"

"Only George," replied May, and there was a general laugh, in which the blushing girl joined.

"Oh, so you have gone and engaged to that rascal, as I prognosticated you would?" said Gabriel, who seemed in the best of spirits. "So I have arrived home in time for the wedding?"

"The day is not yet fixed," replied Mr. Thorne; and then Edith heard him say in a penetrating whisper, "Your cousin Edith is there."

Still she did not look round, although she heard Gabriel advance towards her.

He was certainly struck with the girl's beauty, and, having her eyes turned away, she gave him a good opportunity to gaze at her face without being impertinent.

The girl seemed quite unconscious of his presence, and he had plenty of time to admire her oval face, her white forehead, and dark brown hair.

She wore a velvet dress, which fitted her like her glove, and Gabriel got such a glimpse of the cosy morocco slippers and grey stockings.

"Now, sir, when you have done looking," thought Edith.

"So this is Edith?" said Gabriel, speaking of the girl as though she was a rare work of art; and so she was compelled to look up, and their eyes met.

She saw a man who was quite six feet high, with a proportionate breadth of shoulders, thick, curly, crispy, chestnut-coloured hair, and earnest, deep-set eyes.

He was a magnificent specimen of manhood; but perhaps the chin was too massive and ball-dog looking.

Edith's first glance told her that he had a will equally as strong as her own.

"If I were a soldier," thought Edith, "I should like to follow such a captain. It would be either death or victory with him. He isn't positively ugly."

"So you have heard of my existence?" observed Edith, as he took her hand and held it for a moment.

Then before she could divine the Captain's intention he bent down and kissed her on the cheek with his mustached lips—a proceeding that brought the bright angry blush to her face, and she gave him a look that he never forgot.

A glow came into her face, and a frown on her usually smooth brow that was positively dangerous.

"A cousin's privilege," pleaded Gabriel. He was very sorry he had made the girl angry with him, but he did not regret having stolen the kiss.

"I am not used to provincial manners," replied Edith, disdainfully, as she wiped the cheek he had kissed with a lace pocket-handkerchief, as though he had left some black mark there.

"I had no intention of offending you, Edith," said Gabriel, quite contritely. "But you must remember that this is my home-coming, and I am a little excited."

Gabriel could not tell if the girl had forgiven him or not, for she neither smiled or frowned, but she seemed to regard him as some large, clumsy curiosity.

In her own mind she felt more reconciled to Barner's End now Gabriel had appeared, for women are always just a little interested in a brave officer, and it was evident he was no feather-bed soldier.

He related some of his stirring adventures, much against his will; but the boys insisted upon it, and he good-naturedly complied with their request.

Jack was very much annoyed that he did not have his uniform on, and Will was anxious to know how many war-medals he would have.

It was noticeable to Edith that he never brought himself prominently forward, and always preferred to talk of the deeds of others rather than his own.

It was wonderful to see how the lawyer's hard features would relax as he listened to his eldest son's voice; and it was evident to Edith that Gabriel was his favourite.

More than once Gabriel's eye wandered to his cousin's face, and Edith was not unconscious of this.

Edith watched him as he talked, watched intently, although she could not always see the expression of his face, for he was sitting in a very dark corner of the room.

At length Edith rose, and declared her intention of going to bed, long before the others had any idea of doing such a thing.

It was not that the girl was really fatigued, for she was in vigorous health, but she wanted to show her utter indifference to Gabriel by going off in the middle of one of his most interesting stories.

If Gabriel was annoyed he did not show it, for he went on talking in the same animated way long after she had left them.

Later on in the evening Gabriel and his sister May were alone, and he put this question to her,—

"Have you seen Isidore lately?"

"I have not seen her for some time," said May, speaking in a restrained way that quite startled Gabriel.

"Is there anything the matter, May?" he asked.

"No; only Isidore is travelling in France with her father," returned May.

CHAPTER II.

It was market day at Barner's End, and at a very early hour Edith was aroused from her slumber by the bleating of sheep, the grunting of pigs, and loud, hoarse shouts of drivers. She turned lazily, and closed her eyes, and tried to go to sleep again, but found this impossible, for the din grew louder every moment, and the cattle, men, and horses seemed to delight in making all the noise they could, while country carts, crammed to their utmost capacity, went creaking and groaning by.

The sun came through the venetian blind, making long lines of light on the wall, and Edith came to the conclusion that she had much better get up than remain in bed listening to the discordant sounds. It was very annoying, for it seemed to her that she had only been asleep an hour or two. She went to the window and looked out, to see a drove of bullocks being driven by, but followed by a driver, who probed the hindmost animal in the ribs with his stick. They were putting up the sign-post at the "Blue Lion," and carpenters were hammering and sawing, and the door of the inn was already opened.

While gazing out of the window she caught sight of Gabriel talking and laughing with a stout-looking farmer with a coarse red face. How could he associate with such people,

Edith wondered, and then she hastily drew back, for Gabriel looked up.

Edith didn't see much of Gabriel on that day. He had gone to call on old friends, she was told. Gabriel was a great favourite in the town, and many miles around. Everyone liked him, for he was so frank and genial, and so full of life and animation. The family were anxious to know what Edith thought of Gabriel, and were all surprised and hurt at her indifference.

It was Mrs. Thorne's opinion that her eldest son was simply irresistible, and felt inclined to lose her temper when Edith said, "He would do very well if he was not so big and clumsy. I am not a good judge in weight, but I think he must be nearly fourteen stone!"

"You are very critical, my dear," said Mrs. Thorne, trying to hide her anger by giving a sickly kind of smile.

"What a horrid noise there was this morning," said Edith. "I was awakened at day-break by the most awful din I have ever heard in my life. Can you not put me into another room?"

Mrs. Thorne was quite astonished at this request, and if it had been any other person but Edith would have said something more truthful than pleasant. She had given the girl the best room in the house, had gone to the expense of buying a new carpet and curtains, and still she did not seem satisfied.

Edith had come to Barner's End with the intention of hating Gabriel, but she did not find it so easy to carry out as she had thought. Gradually, in spite of all her struggles, a liking for him, nearly approaching love, came into her heart. She made this discovery one day when they were alone in the garden together, and left him abruptly, much to his surprise. She had no desire that he should discover the state of her feelings, and she was greatly afraid that her face might betray her at that moment.

In spite of all Mrs. Thorne's efforts to keep matters secret, Edith had heard in some way of Gabriel's engagement with Isidore, and she was more than ever determined from that moment not to marry Gabriel. She was in ignorance as to what he intended to do; quite in the dark as to whether he desired to throw Isidore over or not. "If he does throw her over," thought Edith, "it will only be because he wishes to gain possession of Uncle Richard's money, and he will marry me just because he is forced to do so."

She had fully determined if he ever did ask her to marry him, that her answer would be an emphatic "No."

It was observed by everybody that Edith became more capricious and exacting every day, and the person she delighted to tease and annoy the most was Gabriel. Her nature seemed as changeable as the most variable day in April. One moment she would be in the sweetest and best of tempers, and at another her eyes would flash, and she would say the most bitter, cutting, and sarcastic things.

Edith despised and disliked everyone in the lawyer's household save Gabriel, and she fully resolved to quit the place immediately she could force him to give up all idea of marrying her. Then she would be free, and be able to do just as she liked. But would Gabriel give up the money? Such a thing was hardly possible.

"If he does marry," thought Edith, "his married life will be a most unpleasant one."

It is very difficult to analyse Gabriel Thorne's feelings in regard to that little black-eyed cousin of his. She was so hard to understand, so quick tempered, impetuous, and unreasonable. There was often no reason to expect foul weather, when suddenly the smile would vanish from her lips, and she would turn upon him like the little demon she was. Sometimes she would be so amiable and pleasant that he began quite to care for her, and compared Isidore with her to the latter's disparagement, then the ominous frown would appear and he seemed to hate her.

"I should take a great pride in breaking you

in, my proud little cousin," muttered Gabriel, looking after her one afternoon as she hurried away from him in one of her tempers, just because Gabriel had refused to climb up a tall cliff, at the risk of life and limb, to pick her a flower. She had left him with the words "contemptible coward" on her red scornful lips, an accusation at which he could afford to laugh.

"Yes, my dear little cousin, I would surely break you in if I were to marry you," he said again, as he lit his pipe. He spoke of her just as he would have spoken of some vicious horse that required both whip and spur.

As for Edith, she went straight home and told Mrs. Thorne her opinion of her son, much to that lady's indignation. Once again an angry word was on her lips, but she restrained herself on receiving a warning look from her husband.

"But, my dear, you could not expect a man with common sense to risk his neck for the sake of a flower!" said Mrs. Thorne. "As for calling him a coward, it is ridiculous of you, knowing, as you do, how bravely he fought for his country."

"No doubt he fought because he couldn't help himself," and then she went to the piano and began to play and sing. While thus engaged, Gabriel came leisurely into the room and went to the piano, and began to turn over the music for her. At this, she rose and hurried out of the room, giving him a contemptuous glance.

Gabriel could not help feeling interested in her, for he had never seen a girl like her before. He had often told her that he did not approve of her conduct at all times, but she had seemed quite indifferent to his words.

Gabriel was surprised at her many accomplishments. She could swim, hunt, row, and fence, and Gabriel had once laughingly called her a modern Amazon.

After his refusal to pluck the flower for her, Edith avoided him on all occasions when possible, and would always look at him with that contemptuous curl of the upper lip. At first he laughed and then he became annoyed. To a man of his temperament her treatment was unbearable, so he went up to her at last.

"What a dreadful temper you have, Edith? I really think you take the greatest delight in driving me mad. You are the most tormenting girl I have ever seen."

"You are very complimentary, Mr. Gabriel Thorne," said Edith, pretending not to see his outstretched hand. "I think you might be more guarded in your language to a lady."

"But you are so unreasonable, so ready to show your temper when there is no cause for it."

"Your brother Jack would not speak in this way," said Edith; "and I am sure if I had asked him to fetch me that flower he would not have refused."

"Jack is only a lad, and is much lighter than I am," explained Gabriel, "and could climb up the cliffs much easier than I can."

The end of it was that Gabriel went out and soon returned with the identical flower he and Edith had quarrelled about. He did not think it necessary to tell her, however, that he had paid a young and active boy sixpence to pluck it for him. Gabriel was not a madman, and he knew that it would have been certain death to climb that cliff.

On presenting Edith with the flower there was such a look of insolent triumph in her bright dark eyes, such a "have-to-do-as-I-tell-you" expression on her face, that Captain Thorne half regretted having brought it to her.

She had the advantage of him in one way, for although her temper was a quick one she was slow to forget; but Gabriel was quick-tempered too, but then his passion was soon over.

May watched these continued quarrels and make-up with dismay, for she could not help thinking that it would end by their hating each other. How she wished Isidore would return from France.

There could be no doubt that Edith was gaining a strong influence over Gabriel day by day and hour by hour. There was a witchery in her manner and a magic in her glance that bound Gabriel as if by a spell. She was winning him slowly and surely from Isidore, fiercely as he struggled against it. His father had told him the proviso in his uncle's will, and he had seemed very indignant, but Mr. Thorne believed that he would be soon reconciled.

As her power increased, Edith became more tyrannical and wilful, and Gabriel found it difficult to gratify all her caprices. He would make a great show of resistance at first, but in her instance his opposition would melt away like snow before sunshine.

It was wonderful how ingenious Edith was in finding some trivial vexations thing for him to do, and the whole family would be on the girl's side, and declare that it was only her pretty way to torment the gallant soldier out of his life.

Gabriel often knew that he was making a fool of himself, but in spite of this he would do her bidding just for the sake of winning a smile from those coral lips.

They had danced together at the ball at the Town Hall, they had attended several garden parties, and had gone for long drives. Mr. Thorne and his family always contrived that they should be often alone. Occasionally Gabriel would reproach himself for his flirtation with Edith when he thought of Isidore; then he would dismiss the subject with a smile, trying to persuade himself that it was all nonsense after all.

He could not write to Isidore, for he did not know in what part of France she was in.

Edith's life was much brighter than it ever was before, although she did live in a dull provincial town; but it must be confessed that time passed very heavily on her hands when Gabriel Thorne was not near her.

The girl was growing more beautiful, and in spite of her fierce, rebellious temper, everyone in the house began to like her, for there was a charm in her manner that none could resist, and she knew that, however she offended, she had only to smile to be forgiven.

May was the last to surrender, but she at length was compelled to haul down her flag, and to own that she was growing very fond of her wicked little cousin.

Not that she was disloyal to Isidore in any way, for she still hoped that Gabriel would marry her.

If she had not been afraid that Gabriel would break her heart, she would just as soon have had Edith for a sister-in-law.

One warm afternoon Gabriel found Edith in her little sitting-room that overlooked the smooth-kept lawn.

He had been to London a couple of days, and, quite taken by surprise, the girl flushed up to the roots of her dark brown hair, much to her annoyance, for she did not wish him to see how pleased she was at his return.

But there is a look that comes in the eyes sometimes, an expression that comes to the face on occasions which go far to explain what is passing in the mind.

"Can it be that she is really fond of me?" Gabriel asked himself, as he took out something from his pocket, and handed it to his cousin, saying as he did so—

"A present for you, Edith."

The girl took the little packet with murmured words of thanks.

It was not so much the present she cared about as the fact that he had thought of her.

With a true woman, it is not the value of the article given that she cares about. It may be only a simple little flower, or some pretty, inexpensive book; but, if she is young, generous, and innocent, she will value it all the more for its simplicity.

One large, costly present will not have half the effect in a woman's heart as little trifling articles frequently given.

The costly thing shows that she was thought

of once, the little trifles that she is constantly in the mind.

She looked up at Gabriel's face as she spoke, and then down at the little packet that was wrapped round with brown paper.

What was the piece of oblong paper outside the little packet? It was a photograph; and he had doubtless presented her with a portrait of himself, the conceited fellow!

She turned it over, and saw a woman's face, and under it was writing.

"You have given me this by mistake," said Edith, handing him back the photograph, and retaining the present.

And, with a blush like a foolish schoolgirl, Gabriel took it, and hurried out of the room to hide his confusion.

"He loves Isidore still!" Edith told herself, looking after him till he closed the door.

This thought seemed an unpleasant one to Edith, for she displayed no curiosity to unfasten the little packet she still held in her hand, but stood near the open window with a half angry, half hurt expression on the proud, dark, sensitive face.

CHAPTER III.

THERE was war to the knife between Gabriel and Edith now, and there now seemed no chance of its ever being otherwise.

To tell the truth, Edith was furiously jealous ever since she had seen the photograph.

She certainly seemed very eccentric to Gabriel, for he was quite unconscious of having committed any offence.

There is no doubt that she loved him very dearly; and it seemed hard to her that she could get no affection in return from the only person she had ever cared about.

It must be confessed that she did not bear her sorrow with sweet maidenly dignity and resignation.

She had the same old wilful spirit as when she had shrieked and struck at the garret door with her clenched hands when a child—the same indomitable will that had made her defy her Uncle Richard, that had made her never deign to ask for mercy or pardon at his hands.

If she was defiant and reckless she kept her one great secret well, and no one knew how she fretted when once in her room, with the door securely locked. Then she would give way to tears and useless fits of temper.

Up till now she had only to place her head on the pillow to fall asleep; but now she was wide-awake half the night, and she could not understand it.

There was a heavy pain at her heart that kept her in a state of constant torment, and she walked up and down the room in the night, her bare feet making no sound.

When she rose in the morning she would have a headache, and be quite unrefreshed; but no one suspected what it cost her to appear happy and contented, and Edith told herself that nobody cared.

Gabriel and Edith always avoided each other now, and the young man had been heard to declare that he quite believed that she was going mad, for her conduct was quite unaccountable to him.

So high were her spirits at times that they seemed unnatural. Her eyes were strangely bright, and she always felt in a burning fever.

At length she made herself so thoroughly disliked by the servants that they all gave warning, saying that they were not slaves to be ordered about by Miss Edith in such a way, and would not put up with it.

It seemed strange that a girl of Edith's age should so completely turn a house topsy-turvy, but she did; and they all wondered how Uncle Richard had put up with her so long.

Edith was sitting on a bench close under the library window one evening when she heard Mr. Thorne and Gabriel talking together, and found herself to be the subject of their conversation.

"I tell you, father," said Gabriel, most emphatically, "that Edith is the greatest vixen I've ever seen. Her sarcastic remarks bite into one's heart like aquafortis on steel. She deliberately picks out one's weak points and hold them up to ridicule, and, in short, is the worst-tempered, most vindictive, and mischievous little plague I ever met, and it would be a good riddance to get her out of the house. We shall never have any peace or quietness till she has gone!"

Having delivered himself of this scathing denunciation of Edith, Gabriel relapsed into silence, and striking a match lit his pipe. If he could only have seen poor little Edith at that moment, he might have regretted being so unsparing in his criticisms of her conduct. Certainly the girl deserved some punishment for her stiff-necked pride and obstinacy, but not to drink such a bitter draught as this.

To be spoken of in such a fierce, resentful way, to know that Gabriel desired her absence, was a cruel knowledge, and to think that he could smoke on quietly after giving utterance to such words!

After the match had been struck silence reigned in the room, but without the wind rustled gently the leaves and fluttered the little feather in Edith's hat.

The girl sat there for some time, although since she had heard Gabriel's harsh opinion of her the evening air sent a strange, icy chill to her heart, but she dare not enter the house lest her pale, quivering, tear-stained face might provoke inquiry.

Gabriel should never know that she had overheard the conversation in the library; she would be careful that he should not guess how much she had felt then.

She remained out in the garden, and the stars grew brighter in the sky; the lamp had been lighted in the library and the windows shut down.

"I will go away, and Gabriel shall never see my face again!" the girl whispered to herself, and then she rose to her feet and went indoors.

Edith was quite cool and collected when she entered the sitting-room, and no one had the slightest suspicion what was passing in her mind; but it was noticeable that she made herself very agreeable that evening.

She spoke to every one present, had an appreciative smile for the old lawyer, played draughts with Jack, and when Gabriel asked her to sing went to the piano at once. She had made up her mind that this was to be the last evening she would spend amongst them, and therefore she wished all of them to remember her at her best.

Since Gabriel had regarded her in the light of an intruder she would go away, taking the utmost precaution to prevent them tracking her out. She doubted much if they would desire to do so; but it was safer to frustrate an attempt to discover her whereabouts.

She sang a pathetic song that evening, and rendered it so well that it brought tears into the eyes of those who heard it, and echoed in their ears when she no longer lived under that roof.

It was a farewell song, a valedictory address to them all, although they knew it not, and Gabriel often remembered the look in that fair face when she bade him good-night.

There was something new and strange in her manner that he could not quite make out. It puzzled him for a few short hours, and then the pain in those dark, expressive eyes was explained.

Impulsively he bent down and kissed her white brow and she did not resist it, but giving him a warm pressure, passed slowly out of the room.

Edith did not go to bed, although she felt tired and weary, but seating herself at a table began to write a letter.

"MY DEAR COUSIN GABRIEL.—In all probability this is the only letter I shall ever write to you, and you will not be able to answer it, for when you read it I shall have left the shel-

ter of your father's roof. You have all been kind to me, more considerate than I deserved, and I thank you all very much.

"I have a difficult task to explain myself in my present state of mind, but I wish you to understand, Gabriel, that it is I who refuse to marry you; it is I who refuse to be coerced into a false and irrevocable step.

"I will not have my future arranged for me by my dead uncle; and therefore, under the conditions of the will, by rejecting you I lose all claim to the property.

"With a fervent wish that the money will bring you every happiness, I say adieu, trusting that you will speak and think kindly of me sometimes. "MATH."

There were tears in her eyes when she put down her pen with a long-drawn sigh of relief, but she took care that they did not fall upon the letter.

"I have made no sacrifice," she said to herself; "no sacrifice at all in giving the money to the man I love!"

Surely such a woman was capable of high and noble things!

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Gabriel perused Edith's letter he was greatly surprised at its contents, and so were all the family when he read it to them. That the girl should throw over Gabriel in this way was almost inconceivable to Mrs. Thorne, who considered herself to be the most irresistible of men. As to Mr. Thorne, he was quite as much astonished as his wife, but in a different degree. There was nothing very peculiar in a woman being indifferent to a particular young man, but there was something very strange in a woman giving up her share of a large fortune, and Mr. Thorne could not make this out at all.

Since Gabriel had not liked the idea of marrying Edith, perhaps things had turned out for the best, Mr. Thorne told himself. She had renounced the property; Gabriel, therefore, would have all the money. The lawyer was delighted, but Gabriel looked very grave as he folded up the letter.

May was very pleased that Edith had left them, for she now believed that her brother would now think more of Isidore. Little did Miss May think how she was throwing away her sympathy on a most undeserving object, for Isidore was not the kind of girl to break her heart over any one.

"Well, my dear Gabriel!" cried Mr. Thorne, giving him a playful tap on the back. "So everything has come right. You now have a right to all your Uncle Richard's money without being obliged to marry Edith! Perhaps it is as well as it is, for she had a very nasty temper, nice as she could be at times."

"I am very sorry that she should have given up the money," replied Gabriel, crumpling up the letter in his hand.

"Hilloah, Gabriel, be careful," cried Mr. Thorne, and he turned very white. "Do you see what you are doing?"

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Gabriel.

"Don't you know that the letter you hold in your hand is a very valuable document?" said Mr. Thorne. "Give it to me, Gabriel, and I'll have a sixpenny stamp put upon it. If you destroy that letter all would be lost, for Edith might then come back and alter her mind."

Gabriel Thorne allowed his father to take the letter, and he began to smooth it out, while Gabriel glanced intently at the fire, apparently in deep thought. After a time he rose from his chair, with the look of a man who had come to a sudden determination. Uncle Richard's money was very acceptable to the young man, but he did not like to think of Edith being deprived of it.

"What are you going to do?" asked Mr. Thorne, anxiously, for he saw the expression of determination in his son's face, and was

afraid that he was about to commit some Quixotic act.

"I'm going to find Edith," replied Gabriel, very quietly.

"What for?"

"I wish to explain to her that I must give up the money, not her," said Gabriel Thorne.

"It would be cruel to allow Edith to make such a sacrifice, cowardly to let a young girl like her struggle with the world.

"You are mad, Gabriel!" said Mr. Thorne. "Surely you will not be such an idiot as to resign your position?"

"Call me what you like, my mind is made up," replied Gabriel, as he put on his hat and coat. "Edith cannot get a living. She has not been brought up with the idea of labour, and the struggle for bread would absolutely break her heart."

"The girl is strong and self-reliant, and there is no danger of her sinking!" declared the lawyer. "Take my advice, my dear Gabriel, and accept the money."

But Gabriel would not be guided by his father in this matter and hurriedly left the house; but after he had walked half-way down the High-street stopped suddenly. How was he to trace Edith, who would purposely do all in her power to put him off the scent? Luckily for Gabriel the people of Berner's End were very early risers, and happening to meet Isaac Reed, the young chemist, he accidentally mentioned that he had seen Edith, who had appeared to be in a great hurry.

"She would hardly speak to me," said Isaac Reed, in conclusion. "I hope, Gabriel, that I have done nothing to offend Miss Edith?"

"Probably she was in a hurry to catch a train," observed Gabriel, quickly. "You must know that Edith left us most unexpectedly this morning!"

Gabriel left the chemist abruptly, and hurried to the station. He was well-acquainted with the ticket clerk, who was looking up the office, for there would be no train for an hour.

"I saw a lady answering to your description this morning," said the clerk.

"Did she take a ticket?"

"Yes."

"Up or down?"

"At first she asked for a ticket for Charing Cross; but before I could give it to her she altered her mind and said Endlethorpe."

"Thank you," said Gabriel, very much relieved in his mind, for it would be much easier to find Edith at Endlethorpe, than in great, large, overcrowded London. Endlethorpe, he thought, as he retraced his steps. "That is the place where she lived with Uncle Richard! Probably she has some friends there!"

He went back home and packed his portmanteau, and as he was looking in his sister May came into the room.

"So you are going in search of Edith?" she asked.

"Yes, the train will leave here in half-an-hour."

"If Isidore should happen to write shall I send on the letter to you?" asked May, timidly.

"You can send on my letters to the Railway Hotel, Endlethorpe," replied Gabriel, and it seemed so strange to May that he should have to be reminded of Isidore's existence. It was not like this of old.

On his arrival at Endlethorpe the first thing Gabriel did was to order dinner, for he had had nothing inside his lips that day. He was tolerably certain now that he would find Edith, so did not hurry himself, but enjoyed his meal like a sensible man. Then, as darkness was beginning to fall upon the earth, he walked in the direction of his uncle's house. He found the place very soon, but saw no lights in any of the windows. To all appearance it was quite deserted, but on ringing the bell very loudly he heard the sound of footsteps in the passage, and then the door was opened by an old and feeble woman.

"I have reason to believe that Miss Edith Thorne has been here?" said Gabriel. It was one of his characteristics that he never beat about the bush.

"She has been here, sir," said the old woman. She manifested no surprise, and evidently expected a visitor. Probably Edith had told her that someone might call.

"Are you quite sure she is not here now?" asked Gabriel, quite sharply.

"No, she left here an hour ago," replied the old woman, and now Gabriel reproached himself for having delayed a moment.

"Do you know where she has gone to?" was the next question that Gabriel asked.

"No, sir!" replied the woman, and Gabriel saw that she had received instructions.

"What was Miss Edith's object in coming here? And why did she remain only such a short time?" asked Gabriel, not liking to own himself beaten.

"I am not at liberty to tell," replied Mrs. Crip; and seeing that he could get nothing further from the old woman he returned to his hotel.

On the following morning he received a letter from his sister, and a very long one it was.

"MY DEAR GABRIEL,—I have just heard of Isidore, through a mutual friend, and I find that she has returned from France quite a month, and consequently must be aware of your arrival in England. I cannot understand her reason for not writing to you, and her conduct seems very extraordinary to me, to say the least.

"I hardly like to repeat what I have been told; but still it would be wrong in me to keep back anything from you; so I hope you will forgive me for what I am going to say. I have heard sinister rumours regarding Isidore, rumours that I would not pay any attention to but for one reason—her long, inexplicable silence.

"It is said, my dear brother—upon what foundation I cannot tell—that Isidore has a new sweetheart, a man of wealth, and that she has thrown you over for him. I hope you will forgive me if the news I send is not reliable; but you can find out as to its truth by going to Falconbridge."

It is hardly necessary to tell the reader that Gabriel took his sister's advice.

His pursuit of Edith was given up, and he at once hastened to Falconbridge.

He tried to persuade himself that there was not a word of truth in what May had heard; but he was marvellously pale, notwithstanding all his incredulity.

He had never until then contemplated the possibility of Isidore playing him false, and he wondered greatly how this scandal had arisen concerning the woman whom he regarded as his future wife.

He remembered the last interview he had with her, the promise she had made him, and the kiss she had given him at parting.

He was old enough to know the change that a few months will make in a woman's heart.

The hedges were bare and leafless as he had seen them a year ago; and the pond were frozen over just as they had been when Gabriel had asked Isidore to be his wife.

He could hardly believe, as he walked along the familiar lane, that he had been away so long.

Turning an abrupt corner in the lane, Gabriel Thorne came in view of a small old-fashioned cottage, that stood in a small flower-garden.

He stopped suddenly to look at the little place, his heart beating a great deal more quickly than it had ever done in the battlefield. A cool chill ran through his frame; a strange dread had fallen upon him. He felt faint and unwell.

"I am a fool!" he told himself. "A moment ago I was gay and light-hearted, and now I am as sad as I can be."

With an attempt at a laugh Gabriel Thorne hurried forward. Passing through the rustic garden-gate he knocked at the door which was

immediately opened by a pretty servant-girl, who was smartly dressed.

"Is Miss Isidore at home?" he asked, in a voice that trembled slightly.

"Miss Isidore at home, sir?" said the servant, who was a stranger to Gabriel Thorne. "Miss Isidore at home! Why, she has gone to get married! Why, what is the matter? Are you ill, sir?"

It was no wonder that the girl asked this question, for Gabriel Thorne stood at the porch, white and ghastly, his eyes fixed upon her face despairingly.

"Are you ill?" repeated the girl, kindly. "Shall I get you a glass of water?"

At this moment the sound of joy bells broke out on the air, but they had no joyous ring for poor Gabriel Thorne, for were they not the death-knell of all his hopes?

They had one effect upon Gabriel Thorne. The sound of the bells aroused him from the stupor into which the servant's words had caused him to fall.

"I'll stop the wedding!" he cried.

He rushed down the garden path at headlong speed, while the servant looked after him in utmost surprise.

Gabriel knew the way to the church, had he not been guided by the sound of the bells. It was the very church where he had thought of marrying—the very bells he heard were those which might have proclaimed his own wedding!

Louder grew the bells, mocking him, as it were, with their iron tongues. The blue sky, the green fields, the keen winter air had no longer any attractions for him. He saw nothing as he walked along, the sound of the wedding bells ringing in his ears. Only one thing he hoped for, and that was that he should arrive before the wedding had taken place.

Gabriel Thorne was confident of one thing. Treachery had been at work! Someone had been traducing him to Isidore, and she, believing what she had been told, had consented to the marriage! It was her aunt that had done this, Gabriel felt sure. He saw her object now in putting off her marriage for a year.

Hurrying along with clouded brow and bent head Gabriel Thorne came in contact with a pedestrian coming the opposite way.

"Why don't you look where you are going?" said a voice. "Why," added the new-comer in a more pleasant voice. "Let me congratulate you on your safe return!" and he seized Gabriel by the hand.

"I wish that I had been slain on the battlefield," said Gabriel Thorne, bitterly.

"Nonsense, Gabriel," said his friend, still retaining his hand.

"Let me go, or I shall be too late," said Gabriel, savagely—so savagely that Johnson started back.

"This is a nice way to treat a friend!" said Johnson, as Gabriel darted down the road. "How wild and ill he looked! I have it. He has heard of Isidore's wedding!"

Now the church tower came into view through the tall elms, and Gabriel could see the thrilling, palpitating bells through the couvres window as they swung to and fro.

A crowd of curious persons were gathered round the church gate; then there was a stir amongst the crowd, and necks were eagerly craned, and all eyes looked in one direction; then some people left the church, and then the bride appeared.

She was fairer than ever in her bridal dress in Gabriel's eyes, and a pain shot through the young man's heart; but he drew himself up in a soldierly way, as she came slowly along, quite unconscious that her old lover was there.

Isidore seemed gloriously happy—so happy, in fact, that Gabriel could scarcely endure the sight of the treacherous woman. Not once did Gabriel look at the bridegroom; he had only eyes for the bride.

How quickly the blood rushed from Isidore's face, leaving it as white as the veil that partly concealed it from view when she caught sight of Gabriel.

She was one of those who could not live on a memory. She had loved Gabriel when near and forgotten him when far away, and now he had returned her old affection for him was gaining the ascendancy.

She was a cowardly little woman, and trembled from head to foot, and leaned heavily on her husband's arm as Gabriel whispered in her ear,—

"I have come to remind you of your broken promise!"

He said no more, having no opportunity; but his words had the effect of sending the blood back to her face.

He followed Isidore's movements with a curiously intense gaze, not noticing that his strange manner was attracting some attention.

Isidore was very glad to sit down in the carriage, for her limbs trembled, and she felt very faint. Her husband was impressed with the sudden change in her manner, for the smile had gone from her lips; but he little guessed the real cause of her preoccupation.

Isidore was thinking to herself, "Oh, why did he come too late?"

The stern, un pitying glance of the man she had so wronged, the accusing voice, she would remember as long as her life would last.

It had seemed such a long time waiting for him, and now he had appeared on her wedding-day, of all others.

Gabriel stood at the gate until the carriage drove away. But Isidore never once looked in his direction, although she knew instinctively that his eyes were fixed upon her.

The last he saw of her she was looking down at the bouquet she was holding in her trembling hand, and her husband was charmed by her coyness.

So disturbed was Gabriel that he went into the quiet churchyard, and sat down to rest. The sexton, who was cutting the grass, came up to him, and, with an eye to the main chance, thinking that he had lost someone recently from the grief expressed on his face, asked him if he could be of any assistance to him in finding out the grave he wanted.

Without condescending to reply Gabriel rose and hurried away, muttering to himself,—

"I can have no peace even here."

It was the first great disappointment, and his suffering was keen and bitter.

It is doubtful if Gabriel would have been happy if he had married Isidore, for she was one of those women who have only their beauty to recommend them.

When the eyes grow less bright, and their fair complexions vanish, all love for them passes away.

But for the moment sorrow was supreme, and reason and commonsense held no longer possession of Gabriel's mind.

Driven from the churchyard Gabriel was utterly careless as to which direction he took. He groped his way almost like a blind man, and people turned round to look after him, quite startled and shocked by his white face; but he heeded them not, being perhaps quite unconscious that there was anyone about to see him.

Gabriel was very glad when the clangour of the bells ceased; but the silence was very painful to him too.

He did not feel at all revengeful against Isidore; he was grieved to find her false, that was all.

Had he escaped death on the battle-field while other men died, with women with true and faithful hearts waiting for them at home!

Quite unconsciously Gabriel had taken the most picturesque path in the neighbourhood. All that was wanted to make the place beautiful was summer air and summer sunshine.

To his right was an ivy-covered wall, and behind that wall was a garden, much higher than the road; and anyone in the before-mentioned garden could look over the wall and down into the road if desiring to do so. Some one was looking over the wall—a young, dark-faced girl, who was much surprised to

see Gabriel. She was too much astonished to move hand or foot, and remained rooted to the spot.

If Gabriel Thorne had only taken the trouble to look up, he would have seen his cousin Edith, but he was too much engrossed in his own sad thoughts to do this, so passed on quite unconscious of her proximity.

Edith could not help noticing how pale and careworn he looked, and for one moment told herself that he had come in search of her. The next instant she reproached herself for her vain folly. Surely his coming there must be quite an accident; for if he had been in pursuit of her he would have been much more watchful.

Edith felt very much annoyed with herself in taking such an interest in Gabriel. The sudden knowledge that she was capable of such tender weakness had an overwhelming effect upon her.

She was ashamed of this foolish affection, this touch of humanity, and had fought against her great love for Gabriel, but in vain. If her love for Gabriel was folly, the folly had taken such a deep root in her heart that it was quite impossible to eradicate it. Of a warm and impulsive nature, Edith loved and hated with equal ardour.

Edith had taken refuge in the house of an old married actor who had taught her elocution. Being tolerably successful, he had taken a little cottage in the centre of his district, for he played at little country towns within a radius of twenty miles of his home. Sometimes he would remain away from home for a week, and would return on the Saturday morning.

Edith had visited the actor's family when her uncle was alive, and had spent many pleasant hours there.

Dick Denmead had always declared that Edith would make her fortune on the stage, and he had gone so far as to declare that he would obtain her an engagement after he had given her some instruction.

On leaving the Thornes, Edith had resolved to put Mr. Denmead to the test, and to find out if he meant what he said, or only desired to pay her a meaningless compliment. Not that she cared to appear on the stage. Far from it; but it occurred to her that she could earn more money by that than any other way.

She had often told Mr. Denmead that she hated the idea of becoming an actress; but he always replied that he was sure the excitement would be congenial to her.

The old actor was delighted to see Edith, and declared that if she only studied hard for three months, he would be sure to get her on the boards.

They discussed ways and means, and to prove his confidence in her abilities, offered to give her board and lodging, and she was to pay him when her salary became large enough.

CHAPTER V.

It was many days before Gabriel appeared at Berner's End, and when his good little sister May saw his face she at once guessed what had happened. Most people would have allowed their curiosity to gain the ascendancy, and have questioned him, but May was not one of those. She saw at once that Gabriel had suffered, and had no desire to open the wound that would take so long healing. Gabriel understood his sister, and thanked her for her consideration.

It was a long time before Gabriel asked if anything had been heard of Edith. To tell the truth, Gabriel missed Edith, and so did May, now that she had found Isidore to be such a little traitress.

If Edith had been there to quarrel with Gabriel, perhaps she would have been able to have aroused him from the strange lethargy that was creeping over him. Friends told him that he was getting thinner, but he only

laughed; but the laugh he gave had not the same old ring about it, and there were many who were sorry to hear it, and wondered what had come over Gabriel.

As yet Gabriel had not touched a farthing of Uncle Richard's money, and he had made up his mind that he would not do so until Edith was found.

As time went on Gabriel contrasted Edith and Isidore, and to the latter's disadvantage too. Isidore was soft and gentle in manner, and Gabriel could not once recall having seen her in a temper. She was one of those people who appear kind and amiable to every one, but who can be cruel and treacherous when they like. For all her winning ways, Isidore had a deceitful heart, or she would never have played false to Gabriel.

Edith had a most impulsive temper, but she was as true as steel.

Edith always said what she meant, and Gabriel knew instinctively that if she once gave her heart that she would never change.

If it had not been for Isidore things would have turned out differently, Gabriel told himself. He would have been more lenient to Edith, and in all probability they would have ended by marrying.

Gabriel's leave had expired, and he had to return to his regiment and take up his quarters at a dull garrison town. He would have preferred to go out to some war, where there was a good chance of being killed; but everything was so wretchedly peaceful just then, and he saw that he must live on.

His brother officers found him a changed man. They believed him to be surly when he was only sad, and he gradually became unpopular—he who was formerly the most sociable of men. The soldiers, too, began to dislike him, for he was very stern, and had become a very strict disciplinarian. His men became smarter, and were on the alert, and this was noticed by all.

We do not mean to imply that Gabriel was unjust, but he was a great deal more critical and inclined to find fault than formerly, and did not spend so many hours in the billiard-room or at the card-table.

He seemed to be studying hard and even to be overworking himself, but he did not do himself nearly the same harm by his useful occupations as his more dissipated comrades. Gabriel found that hard work was the best thing for him, since the mental effort absorbed his attention, and made him oblivious of the past for the time being.

He had never realised before that he had any particular talent, but now he was surprised to find that he had a clearer brain than he thought. Other people were just as much surprised as himself, and everyone declared that Gabriel had made up his mind to get on in the world. It was the general belief that Gabriel had become ambitious, and as an ambitious man is never liked, he was very much shunned. It seemed strange to most of his friends that he should work so hard after having passed his examination.

"Gabriel used to be a good fellow once," was the verdict of everyone, "but he has changed into a surly, unsociable brute!"

Nobody knew of his sorrow, and perhaps would not have sympathised with him if they had.

There was one young fellow who still attached himself to Gabriel, and this was Charles Paget. He owed Gabriel a debt of gratitude, for when wounded Gabriel had carried him out of reach of the enemy's fire.

"By Jove!" he would often say, when telling the story of Gabriel's bravery; "it was very lucky for me that I am a little dwarf of a man, or Gabriel would never have been able to carry me. I always used to envy you big, tall fellows, but now I see it is not always an advantage to be six feet high."

Little Charles Paget would never hear a word said against Gabriel. If anyone spoke to his hero's disparagement when he was in the room, Charles would give him a bit of his mind; and at length this got to be so well

known that no one mentioned Gabriel's name in his presence.

Charles Paget could say very nasty things when he liked, and was not a bit afraid of the biggest man in the regiment. Everyone liked and respected Charles Paget, with his beardless, boyish face, and the bluest, finest eyes that ever were seen.

Charley Paget had noticed the change that had come over Gabriel, but, being a staunch friend, would not own it to anyone. He still admired Gabriel's handsome face, but he could not help regretting that there was not the old warmth and light in it. He was so cold and listless that he repelled all sympathy.

Even though so much changed, Gabriel could not treat Charley as he treated others. This was quite impossible. It is not natural for the thickest mountain of snow to resist the warmth of the sun altogether, and Charley would generally succeed in winning a smile from Gabriel in spite of himself. Charley would sometimes persuade his friend to play a game of billiards, or to go to a little supper.

One day Charley came rushing into Gabriel's room without the least ceremony. He was the most excitable little fellow in the world, and would often take offence where none was meant, and apologise the next moment. He was as sensitive as a school-girl about some things.

"Well, now?" said Gabriel, looking up, pen in hand.

"I am afraid I am a confounded nuisance!" "Not at all," said Gabriel. "Sit down, old fellow," but the look on his face gave the denial to his words.

"Well, I've just come to tell you a piece of startling news," observed Charley, in confidential tones.

"I suppose you have come to tell me to put five pounds on a horse that you think will win. No, thank you, my dear boy; you have let me in three times running."

"No, it isn't that, my dear fellow!" said Charley, speaking like one who had something to tell.

"What is it, then?" "Well, you know the theatre has been shut up for many months."

"And a good job too," remarked Gabriel. "I fairly believe that the rat-hole will catch light some day and roast and burn a hundred people. The passages are narrow and winding, and it is nearly all wood."

"Why look at the dark side of things, Gabriel?" said Charley. "The barn is going to be opened again, and a new actress is about to come out. According to the bills issued and all local papers she is going to startle the world!"

"So you are still innocent enough to be taken in by puff paragraphs in local papers?" said Gabriel. "Why, Charley, I am surprised at you!"

"I wish you would have a little confidence in human nature," observed Charley, laughingly. "Do you know, old fellow, that you are growing more gloomy and suspicious every day? Why did you carry me out of the enemy's fire if you do not think life worth living?"

"I sometimes think I did wrong," said Gabrielle, and then they both laughed.

"You must come to the theatre," said Charley, seeing his advantage. "You see, old fellow, my old friend Dick Denmead has a protegee, and he wishes to have a very full house."

"Then you are fond of actors, and acknowledge them as your friends?"

"Why not?" asked Charley. "They are nice fellows as a rule," and Charley would not leave Gabriel until he had promised to go to the theatre.

Gabriel gave a reluctant consent, and pushed his friend out of the room, then locked his door to prevent further interruption.

Gabriel quite forgot his promise to go to the theatre, when Charley came to remind him of it in the evening.

Great was Charley's horror to find that he

was not yet dressed, and heavy was his indignation when Gabriel advised him to look up some other fellow.

"If you do not come you will spoil my evening!" declared Charley, with a look of disappointment in his handsome face.

"How?"

"I shall stop away too."

This humble threat had the desired effect, and Gabriel and Charley went in arm-in-arm.

The theatre was a very dingy place, or, at least, Gabriel thought so, but it was very well filled.

It must be confessed that Mr. Charles Paget had a poor ear for music, and enjoyed the discordant sounds that came from the orchestra.

It would have been all the same to him if it had been a street-organ, for he found beauty in everything, and had a keen and sensible appreciation of life that Gabriel envied.

Gabriel was very glad when the curtain went up, for then the music ended.

The new actress was certainly very prepossessing, and this created a favourable impression. But it was very doubtful how long the audience would remain in a good humour.

The girl would have passed through the ordeal very well indeed, but for a most unfortunate accident.

Her eyes happened to fall on Gabriel just at the moment he recognised her; and then it was that Edith lost her self-possession, and stopped short in the middle of a speech.

"Go on!" cried the gallery, while those in the pit stamped their feet.

The spell was broken, and Edith went through her part in the greatest confusion, standing in need of the prompter very often.

She never knew how she got through that evening, for she was hissed and jeered at, and when the curtain went down for the last time fainted away.

She was told that her services would no longer be required, and went home to Dick Denmead's house almost broken-hearted.

He tried to console her in every way, telling her she must not be cast down because of one failure.

Gabriel tried to see Edith, but missed her in some way.

In the morning, however, he received a letter from his cousin that quite surprised him.

"Why are you not satisfied?" it ran. "I have resigned the money to you. I changed my name in order that you should not know of my hope of being an actress; but you have found me out. If you had not come to see me on my first appearance, I should not have made a failure, and blaming you for the cause of my ignominy I hate you!"

Gabriel read the letter in bewilderment. She was most unjust and unreasonable because he had been the innocent cause of her failure; and he resolved to see her as soon as he could.

It was certainly very unfortunate that he had gone to the theatre, and he blamed Charley for all the mischief that had been done.

Of late he had often thought of Edith, while Isidore had completely gone from his mind; or, if he did think of her sometimes, it was to congratulate himself upon the fact that he had not married her. It was only a boy and girl love after all.

It seemed so strange to Gabriel that Edith should have been so disturbed on seeing him. Could it be that she had overheard the unkind words he had said about her the day before her flight? And was it possible that the girl liked him with more than a cousinly affection?

Gabriel dismissed this thought at once, and blamed himself for being so vain.

Edith had put no address, but Gabriel knew that Charley was a friend of Dick Denmead's, and in all probability would know where to find him.

Perhaps, after all, it was a good job that she had made a failure, for now she would see there was no chance of her making a living on the stage.

Gabriel had an old-fashioned prejudice

against actors, and he did not like the idea of Edith being one.

Edith's letter was still in his hand when Charley rushed into the room, upsetting a chair in his hurry.

Gabriel looked up reprovingly.

"The war rumours had some foundation after all!" observed Charley; "and we shall have to go to Egypt!"

"I'd sooner go anywhere else!" said Gabriel, not quite understanding Charley's delight.

"Anything is better than the monotony of barrack life," observed Charley.

"Now I warn you before we start," observed Gabriel, "that if you expose yourself to unnecessary danger I'll make no attempt to rescue you."

"Oh! I daresay we'll settle the Arab fellows in no time," said Charley disdainfully.

"Come now, old fellow, don't begin boasting. Wait until the battle is fought and won."

"It is very lucky, our regiment was picked out," cried Charley.

"Yes, we ought to deem ourselves very fortunate," said Gabriel drily; "but let us speak about another matter. I want to find out the whereabouts of my cousin. Can you put me up to anything?"

"Dick Denmead will tell me anything I wish to know," said Charley, quite cheerfully. "Poor old fellow, he'll be bitterly disappointed at your cousin's failure."

We may mention that Gabriel had taken Charley into his confidence, and told him everything about Edith.

"When shall you see Dick Denmead?"

"This very day," said Charley.

"Until you do see him I shall be all anxiety, for you know my cousin Edith gave me the slip once and may do so again," said Gabriel.

"She seems to be a regular little spitfire according to the letters you just showed me," replied Charley. "It was most unfortunate, though, that you should have upset her performance."

"Do me the favour to go to Dick Denmead at once?"

"I'll order my dog-cart and we'll go off together," replied Charley. "A drive through the green English country will do us good before we go to Egypt."

"It is most doubtful if we shall ever return," said Gabriel, quietly.

"Don't talk so despondingly, old chap," replied Charley, and then he went out to order the dog-cart.

The place where Edith lived was some fifteen miles from the barracks, but Charley had a good horse, and they went along at a rapid pace. Gabriel was somewhat surprised when he passed the cottage where Isidore had lived, and was astonished at his own indifference when the church came in view. On the day when he had stood at the church door he had thought that he would never hope to be happy again in this world.

Charley pulled up before the ivy covered brick wall, over which Edith had looked when Gabriel had hurried by on that memorable day.

They found Mr. Dick Denmead smoking in the garden, and immediately he spoke Gabriel took a fancy to him.

He was a perfect gentleman in thought and feeling, and the heart that beat in his breast was a noble one.

In a few well-chosen words Charley told Dick the object of their visit, and he listened with a serious look on his face.

"I am sure Edith will not see you," he said. "She had an idea that you would find her out, and told me that she would not see you. At the present moment she is looked in her room."

"I had really no intention of injuring Edith in the profession she has adopted," said Gabriel, speaking very frankly. "In fact, I was quite in ignorance that I should see her when I went to the theatre."

"It was all through me that he went," said

Charley, speaking as though he had been guilty of a great offence.

"I like Edith very much indeed," said the actor; "but I must own that she has many faults. She is much too proud, and has such a fierce, resentful temper. She was very ungrateful to me last night, although I did all in my power to serve her. She told me that I had no business to persuade her to go on the stage; that I was cruel to encourage her with false hopes."

"Edith has been spoiled by her bringing up," said Gabriel, anxious to speak in favour of his cousin. "You really must not blame her."

"Well," said Dick Denmead, with one of his droll stage smiles, "I must admit that your cousin Edith is gifted with the power of using the strongest and most vigorous language."

"You have been out of pocket through my cousin?" said Gabriel.

"It is being under obligations to me that makes Edith so angry," replied Dick Denmead. "She is grateful to me, and yet she is annoyed at having to be grateful."

"I understand you perfectly," said Gabriel, and then he pulled out his purse. "How much is my cousin pecuniarily indebted to you? I do not mean to imply that she can ever pay you for your disinterested kindness," seeing Dick Denmead flush, "for that would be impossible."

"No, no! I will not take one farthing!" protested Dick.

"Why?"

"Because it would seem as though I had some interested motive in bringing her out," said Dick. "Besides, in her present temper, Edith would sooner be under obligations to me than you, although you are her cousin."

"Don't be a fool," whispered Charley, taking him aside. "Gabriel Thorne can afford to pay, and I know the money would be acceptable."

"I am rather hard up," returned Dick Denmead, in a whisper. "But still it does not seem the right thing to take money from a cousin that Edith seems to hate."

Gabriel was hurt at these words, for he had given Edith no cause to hate him. She was unreasonable and unjust.

He almost thought his cousin a little mad. Certainly her conduct was most strange.

"She is the most eccentric girl I have ever seen," Gabriel tells himself, almost longing to bring her into subjection in some way. "What a thing it would be to conquer such a proud, insolent spirit!"

If he was spared from the war Gabriel determined to make it his business to subdue Edith in some way, for his will was quite as strong as hers.

"If you take the money justly owing to you," said Gabriel, "you will not be putting Edith under an obligation to a cousin whom she hates!"

"Why not?"

Gabriel then told the terms of the will.

"So you see," he said, in conclusion, "that Edith is really entitled to half the money, and she should have it if it were in my power to give it to her!"

At length Dick Denmead was persuaded to take the money for Edith's board and lodging. It was rather under the mark than over it, and, in fact, Gabriel was quite surprised.

"You charge very little," said Gabriel, with a smile.

"Edith costs us hardly anything," replied Dick. "You know, she sleeps with my daughter, and her appetite is very small."

He did not exactly tell the truth for, as we know, Edith was a very luxurious young lady.

Gabriel not only paid what was owing, but paid three months in advance; so he had no anxiety concerning Edith's future.

He took the precaution to warn Denmead not to say a word to Edith concerning the transaction, and the actor was only too willing to agree to this.

"You will do me a very great favour," said Gabriel, in his grave earnest way.

"I shall only be too happy," replied Dick Denmead, eagerly.

"Tell my cousin that if she refuses to see me to-day she may never see me again in this world," said Gabriel. "All I beg of her to do is to give me a five minutes' interview."

The message was given to Edith through Dick Denmead's wife, whose face was absolutely blistered by the paint she had used in her profession. Unlike most actresses, Mrs. Denmead was not an actress off the stage.

Gabriel waited, just a little anxious, for the girl's answer. His heart beat quicker than he would have liked to own when Mrs. Denmead re-entered the room alone.

"Well?" asked Gabriel.

"I hardly like to give you her message," said Mrs. Denmead, hesitatingly.

"But I must hear it," said Gabriel, firmly, in such decided tones that Mrs. Denmead was obliged to comply with his request.

"Well, then, she says she never wishes to see you again."

"Tell her," said Gabriel, the colour mounting to his face, "that I hope she may never regret her cruel words."

Gabriel drove away in the dog-cart so very sadly that Charley did not dare to cheer him up. Edith looked after him from the window. She regretted now having given the message, but it was too late.

Weeks passed on, and Edith fondly hoped that Gabriel would return. But he never came, and Edith began to think that she had gone just a little too far, and that he would never forgive her.

She often cried sometimes when she thought how recklessly she had thrown away Gabriel's honest, manly friendship.

Her surprise was very great when she heard that Gabriel's regiment had gone out to the war. It was one in the front, and Edith prayed every night that Gabriel might be spared. His last words would often come into her mind.

"Tell my cousin that if she refuses to see me to-day she may never see me again!"

CHAPTER VI.

NOTWITHSTANDING her great anxiety concerning Gabriel, Edith studied hard. It was only when at work that Edith ceased to think of Gabriel. Once more Edith appeared on the stage, and acted her part more than creditably, but even Dick Denmead was disappointed and the girl dissatisfied.

After a time, however, Edith began to appreciate applause, and then her acting improved, and her future was assured. From a task her profession became a pleasure, and she acted and spoke with an earnestness that quite surprised herself, and awoke the enthusiasm of those who went to see her.

Edith was one of those actresses who really feel what they say. Some people think it better that an actor should not be carried away by the excitement of his own emotion; that while he holds the audience spell-bound he himself should be cool and unmoved. There is no hard-and-fast line in this matter, however, for there have been good actors on both sides.

Edith was greatly surprised that she should take such a great interest in acting, and as for Dick Denmead he was greatly delighted, and people congratulated him for bringing such a clever woman out.

Edith had been prejudiced against the stage, but she was agreeably surprised to find how many eminent and agreeable persons were engaged in the difficult task of amusing their fellow-creatures.

Miss Thorne had not begun her theatrical career with any great flourish of trumpets, but she soon managed to take almost the leading part, and some of the other actresses were rather sorry she had

"You see, Edith, that I was not mistaken," observed Dick Denmead. "I knew you were a born actress from the first."

"How can I thank you sufficiently for your kindness," replied Edith, contritely. "Pray forgive me for all the unkind words I have uttered, and the ungrateful way I behaved to you because I failed in the first attempt."

She was somewhat changed now, and had grown less selfish and exacting, and Dick Denmead was astonished at the change that had come over her. She was just as hot-tempered and still very vain, but she struggled hard against both these faults, and partly succeeded in conquering them.

She found it a most difficult thing to do, for there was often some sarcastic remark on the tip of her tongue, when she would check herself by a great effort of will.

So while Gabriel was slowly marching with his regiment under the burning, glaring sun of the Egyptian desert; while he shared in the hardships and dangers with his fellow-countrymen, and fought hand to hand with the Arabs, and saw many a noble soldier fall like the corn under the sickle, and heard the loud discordant yells of the enemy and the cries of the wounded and dying; while he slept in the camp, surrounded by a host of pitiless foes, who crawled into the tent, knife in hand, Edith was playing in a great glittering London theatre, and receiving well-merited applause.

At length Edith read in the papers that Gabriel was wounded in the memorable battle when Colonel Burnaby perished through his own incautious act, by rushing forward instead of remaining shoulder to shoulder with his comrades in arms. Thus the square had been broken into, and the tide of victory nearly turned.

Luckily for Edith it was Sunday morning when she heard the news, and she could rest. Had it been on any other day she would not have been able to go through her part at the theatre.

On the Monday evening she appeared on the stage just as if nothing had happened, but she was very pale, and had had to use an extra quantity of paint.

Some weeks went by, and one day a tall man with a very brown walnut face was walking with another fellow much shorter than himself.

It was Charley Paget and Gabriel Thorne, who had lived to return home.

Gabriel had been wounded, but the wound had not been a very serious one.

Charley Paget was very fond of looking in shop windows, and stopped at a stationer's. There were some photographs of actors, and suddenly Charley gave a cry of surprise that made Gabriel stare.

"There is the portrait of your cousin Edith!" said Charley.

"Nonsense," said Gabriel; but he looked nevertheless, and saw at once that his friend was right.

"Wonder where she is playing?" said Charley.

"We can easily find out if she is playing in London by looking over the newspapers," said Gabriel.

"Let us look at the playbills!" suggested Charley. "We can do that easily enough as we stroll down the Strand!"

The third theatre they came to they saw Edith's name on the bill, and in a very prominent position.

Charley was delighted.

"You must find out her address, and go and see her at once," said Charley, impulsively.

Gabriel only shook his head, and a proud look came into his face that made it look almost cruel.

"Why won't you go and see her?" asked Charley.

"She sent me away last time, and I'll never go to see her again," observed Gabriel.

"But she did not know you were going to Egypt!" said Charley.

Gabriel was silent and not convinced, and they both walked on.

Gabriel said good-bye to Charley after they had lunched together.

Charley went to see Edith that night, and when she was leaving the theatre went to speak to Dick Denmead.

"Hallo, Charley!" said Dick, his eyes sparkling with delight; and he held out both his hands. "So you have come back safe and sound, and don't look a penny the worse for all you have gone through!"

Charley was about to make an answer; but Edith, who had turned very white, asked the young man to give her news of her cousin Gabriel.

"I heard that he was wounded!" she said, in a voice that trembled.

"Yes, he was wounded in that terrible battle when brave Burnaby fell!" said Charles Paget, putting on a very grave face. He was acting cruelly for once in his life. He wished to find out if Edith cared much for Gabriel, and he wished to punish her for her treatment of her cousin.

If anyone offended Gabriel they offended him, but Charley could not understand how anyone could feel angry with such a beautiful creature.

"I have heard no news since!" replied Edith. "Do tell me the worst; let me know if he is living or dead? It is cruel to keep me in suspense!"

"Gabriel is all right now. The wound he received would have been nothing particular but for the heat of the climate!"

"Thank Heaven for that!" said Edith; and then there was a sob, and she burst into tears.

Early next morning Charley hastened to tell Gabriel of his meeting with Edith, and how she had shed tears on hearing of his safety.

"You might forgive and forget?" observed Charley.

"I have nothing to forgive!" said Gabriel; "but a man cannot always forget even if he desires to do so."

"I am sure the girl loves you in her own heart. Come and see her to-day. I have her address!"

Gabriel flatly refused to go and see Edith.

He had resolved never to speak to her again, but he was pleased she had shed tears on his account. Isidore had caused him great grief, and he was glad to be revenged upon another woman—a woman who had sent him an insulting message.

"She told me that she never wished to see me again, and I'll not trouble her," said Gabriel.

"I did not think that you had such a revengeful spirit!" said Charley.

"You forget that I am only obeying my cousin's commands," replied Gabriel, thinking that Charley could make no answer to this.

"I fully believe you are breaking her heart," Charley said.

"Women's hearts are not so easily broken," observed Gabriel with an incredulous smile, and then the subject dropped.

Charley was a most clumsy fellow in some things. In fact, he was as awkward as he was good-hearted.

He had made up his mind to bring Edith and Gabriel together, for he believed that Gabriel loved the girl, although he would not own it. He went to see Edith at Dick Denmead's house many times, and at length suggested that Edith and Dick should pay Gabriel a visit. He had a good excuse, for Gabriel was still lame from his wound. The girl made no objection to this, and one morning they all called upon him.

While they were waiting on the steps Edith caught sight of Gabriel, who was standing at the window. She only had a glimpse of him for he drew back on seeing her.

"Mr. Thorne is not at home," said the servant who opened the door; and, deeply hurt and mortified, Edith turned away.

Charley was highly indignant at his friend's

conduct, and kept away from him for a whole week, greatly to Gabriel's surprise. Then they met at a club, and were on their old terms again.

"You put me in a very false position," observed Charley, in reproachful tones.

"How?"

"By refusing to see your cousin when I brought her to your house. I did not think you would commit such an ungentlemanly action."

"You acted very wrongly in bringing her to me," said Gabriel, quietly. "You know very well my aversion to actresses."

"I am sure I acted for the best," said Charley, as he rolled up a cigarette. "How could I help doing all in my power to bring you together when I knew very well how dearly and truly she loves you? She is growing thinner and paler day by day, and Dick Denmead is growing quite alarmed about her. The wear and tear of a theatrical life and the worry will kill her!"

Gabriel listened politely to all Charley had to say, and when he had quite finished, declared him to be the best-hearted fellow in the wide world.

"Edith has had no end of good offers," remarked Charley; "but she will not accept the most eligible man!"

"Have you made a proposal?" asked Gabriel; and then Charley laughed.

Gabriel would have been very sorry to hear of Edith's marriage. It would have inflicted much pain upon him if she had become a wife. How flattering it was to his self-love and vanity that she remained unmarried for love of him!

Gabriel had bought a portrait of Edith, which he very often looked at, and yet he kept from her determinedly. It was his fixed purpose.

He had not dared to go to the theatre in which she played, for fear that if he saw her again he might give way and speak to her.

They were better apart, he told himself, for had he not been deceived by one woman, and were they not all alike? Gabriel was growing very cynical, and was ever ready to make some bitter remark against women.

He talked about them in such a way that Charley grew quite indignant, and took up the cudgels in his defence, like the generous little fellow he was.

"At all events, you can say nothing against your cousin Edith!" he said, triumphantly. "No one has ever dared to breathe a word against her, although she is a public character now!"

"Have you ever heard me say anything against my cousin?" asked Gabriel.

"You only say that she is headstrong and obstinate, and has got the worst temper of any woman in the world!"

"But I never say anything against her moral character."

"Simply because you can't!" said Charley, defiantly.

And then Gabriel shook hands with his friend, and said "good-bye." He was going down to Berner's End to see his father and mother. The place no longer seemed so pleasant to him as it used, although he was made very welcome.

May had been married since he had been in Egypt, and he missed her greatly.

The house was not half so cheerful without his sister, and he saw with sorrow that his mother was in a bad state of health. A friend had been killed during Gabriel's accident.

Gabriel had believed himself to be the one going to death when he had said good-bye; and now this friend, living in this quiet country town, had been killed by a fall from his horse. Everything seemed so different to Gabriel that he was glad to get back to London. He reproached himself for this unnatural feeling when he was in the train.

Charley soon called upon him and told him all the fashionable gossip, and Gabriel listened to him listlessly enough. Then he contrived to speak of Edith, and Gabriel was glad, for he liked to hear news of her, although

he would not have liked anyone to know this.

"I think you ought to interfere in some way!" said Charley, very abruptly.

"Interfere in what?" asked Gabriel.

"In this matter, in regard to your cousin Edith," replied Charley.

"My dear boy, for Heaven's sake be more explicit!" observed Gabriel, who was reclining on a couch, for the wound in the leg was not yet cured, and he liked to take matters easy when he could, like most of us.

"Well, I hope you will not get in a very great temper when I tell you what has happened," observed Charley, bringing his chair nearer to the couch; "but you will be greatly provoked I know, old fellow."

"I don't think my cousin Edith can annoy in any way," said Gabriel, disdainfully.

"But I am sure you are too much of a gentleman not to be annoyed when you hear of the annoyance Edith has been subjected to," said Charley. "A wealthy scoundrel has been following her about on every occasion, and sometimes when he has had opportunity has actually spoken to her. At last she has been compelled to go to the police, and her annoyance has ceased."

"If the annoyance has ceased it is all right," said Gabriel. "My cousin did a sensible thing to complain to the police!"

"But the car has taken a most mean and cowardly revenge," said Charley. "He is now spreading injurious reports against one of the purest girls I have ever known. He says things about Edith that would bring the blood to your face. She is your cousin, you remember, and it is your duty to protect her, although you have quarrelled."

Gabriel was often obliged to listen to reproaches like this from Charley's lips. Gabriel was rather astonished at his friend's audacity, for he had never lectured him until lately.

"Tell me the name of the man who has dared to insult Edith?" said Gabriel, showing his fine white teeth, a habit he had when annoyed. He spoke so quietly that Charley knew that he was beginning to lose his temper.

"Valentine North."

"Yes, I know him well by sight," said Gabriel, rising from the couch. "I must settle accounts with him at once."

"Don't do anything very desperate," said Charley.

"Edith's honour is as dear to me as though she were my sister," declared Gabriel. "No one shall dare to breathe a word against her fair fame."

"What do you intend to do?"

"If I were a Frenchman I should have a duell!" said Gabriel; "but I shall settle the matter my own way."

Gabriel said no more on the subject, but Charley saw that he was greatly roused. "If he meets that little beast I pity him," Charley thought. On that evening Gabriel seemed in the best and highest of spirits. He and his friend dined together, and then looked in at the Promenade Concerts for an hour or two, just to pass the time, and after this turned into their club.

Charley and Gabriel were passing the time very pleasantly at the club, when suddenly a loud voice fell upon both their ears, and Edith Thorne's name was mentioned. Gabriel recognised the voice. Charley wanted to go and warn Valentine North of his danger, but his friend seized him by the arm, and bade him sit still.

"I want to hear what he has to say," said Gabriel.

He had a frown on his face that Charley did not like.

What Valentine North had to say was something that made Gabriel's broad chest heave with rage, and the steady grey eyes turn as dark as night. He was almost terrible in his anger, and Charley really felt frightened as to how the matter would end.

Valentine North uttered the foulest lies that

were ever uttered against a young woman.

There was a peculiar twitch on Gabriel's lips when he rose to his feet. Very slowly he walked across to the little group that had gathered round Valentine North.

"Be good enough to repeat the calumnies you have just uttered against a lady," said Gabriel Thorne, in tones of repressed passion.

Everyone looked at Gabriel, and there was an ominous silence—the calm before the storm.

There was going to be a scene.

Valentine turned very red, and at that moment wished almost that he could sink into the earth.

"I am only saying what I know to be true," replied Valentine North. "She is no worse and no better than any other actress. They are a free and easy lot."

"You'll have to own that you told a cruel and unnecessary lie," said Gabriel, panting for breath.

"Are you interested in the lady?" asked Valentine North.

"Just a little," said Gabriel Thorne, speaking very slowly and distinctly, so that every one in the room could hear what he said; "for the young lady in question is my cousin, for whom I have every reason to respect."

The answer was a most unexpected one, and Valentine North grew more and more confused, for he found himself in a hornet's nest.

"Indeed!" he said. "I was not aware of that fact."

"If you had been aware that the lady had some one to protect her," said Gabriel Thorne, with a look of noble, manly indignation on his face, "you would never have profaned her name with your coward lips. No, you took advantage of her helplessness, her apparent isolation, to revile one who rejected your unwelcome advances with scorn."

"Come now," said North, trying to talk big and looking little. "Come now, I say, you are using strong language."

"I cannot use an epithet less strong when I speak to a cur like you," said Gabriel Thorne.

"I had better go," said North, trembling from head to foot, and turning a palish colour—the colour a youth turns after smoking his first cigar.

"Before you quit this room," said Gabriel Thorne, planting his stalwart back against the door, "before you pass into the passage you must write an acknowledgment that you have fabricated wicked slanders against my cousin. You shall write this, and sign the document with your name."

"I can't do that. I know more about Edith than you do," said Valentine.

His insolent use of his cousin's Christian name, his wicked innuendoes, maddened Gabriel. Scarcely had the words left his lips when Gabriel struck out, hitting Valentine right between the eyes. He fell down, stunned and bleeding.

For a moment every one thought that Valentine was dead, but Gabriel cared not if he had killed him. Gabriel was a man of herculean build, and had never undermined his glorious strength by reckless dissipation. Valentine had no more chance against him than a mouse with a cat.

Valentine was lifted to his feet and placed on a chair, and slowly came to his senses. He said not a word, but when he had sufficiently recovered staggered out of the room.

The men in the club gathered round Gabriel and shook hands with him, and all declared that he was perfectly right in what he had done. Valentine never showed himself in the club again, for he knew he would have the cold shoulder.

(To be concluded next week.)

We speak of educating our children; do we know that our children also educate us?

FACETIÆ.

—O—

A GENTLEMAN of colour—A painter.

Going out with the tide—The wedding party leaving the church.

A TREE is like the man in a hurry. When he leaves he makes good use of his limbs.

SOME men are good because goodness pays best, and then, again, some are good for nothing.

NO wonder there are so many unhappy marriages when the "best man" never gets the bride.

IT is one of the peculiarities of things in general that the freshest men generally tell the stalest stories.

RUNAWAY couple in Kentucky to minister: "Will you join us?" Minister: "Thanks; I don't care if I do."—*American Paper.*

A LONDON girl attended a cooking school, and became so infatuated with the culinary art that she married a supe.

MISS SOFTY: "If you wish to retain a man's love, what would you do?" Mrs. GOLIGHTLY: "Permit him to marry some other woman."

LAUNDRY women are the most humble and forgiving beings on earth. The more cuffs you give them the more they will do for you.

A BOARDING-HOUSE KEEPER announces in one of the papers that he has "a cottage to let containing eight rooms and an acre of land."

YOUNG MAN: "Will you give assent to my marriage with your daughter, sir?" OLD MAN (firmly): "No, sir; not a cent."—*American Paper.*

A FRUGAL wife said to the doctor, who was cutting open the shirt of her husband who had just fallen from apoplexy, "Please cut along the seam, doctor."

"Don't call me 'ducky,' John," said a fat bride to her husband; "it's too suggestive." "Why, precious?" "Because ducks always waddle, you know."

If you want to see an expression of severe simplicity and childlike innocence in a man's face, watch him when he gets change for half-a-crown out of a florin.

A YANKEE who had a land-slide of about a million tons come down on his cow pasture, posted the following sign on the debris: "A new lot just received. For sale cheap."

HE: "I hear that our mutual friend, Miss Elderly, has married a corn doctor." SHE: "Yes, she has succeeded at last in getting a man at her feet. How romantic she is!"

A NEAT proposal of marriage was made by a young man the other night. He said: "Now, Miss Smythe, you say you have ten thousand pounds in your own name; why not put them in mine?"

YOUNG PHYSICIAN (to patient): "What you need is exercise, sir. You should walk more." Patient (searching for his purse): "How much, young man? I walked all last night with the baby."

MR. HAM (the eminent tragedian): "The dramatic profession in this country, my dear sir, is making rapid strides." Dear Sir (very much impressed): "Yes; I suppose it has to at times, to get out of the way of trains."

"Mamma, dear," said Janet, "at what time in the day was I born?" "At two o'clock in the morning." "And at what time was I born?" asked Jack. "Not until eight o'clock." "Ah," cried Janet, "my birthday's longer than yours!" "Well," said Jack, "what's the use of being born before it's time to get up?"

HUMOROUS BREVITIES.

A RECENTLY published book on etiquette says: "Endeavour to select your guests with a sense of fitness. That is, do not invite a fat man to a slim dinner."

"Can February March?" asked the punter, with a sickly smile. "Perhaps not," replied the quiet man, "but April May."

SOCIETY.

THE Duchers of Edinburgh travelled to England by way of Marseilles and Paris, where she spent a couple of days. On the evening of her arrival there she drove in the Bois de Boulogne; and the Parisians, with whom it is de rigueur to admire a Russian, went in raptures over her good looks. She is certainly looking very well just now, and mourning suits her style of face and figure, harmonising with the hyper-stateness of demeanour, which is her especial characteristic. She left for Coburg on Tuesday evening, where she joined her children preparatory to bringing them all to England.

THE most surprising wedding of this year will be furnished by a couple who can claim British Royal descent twice over. The Duc d'Aosta is a direct descendant of our Charles I., and can be recommended as an object of worship to adorers of the Stuart line. Princess Lœtitia, his niece and *fiancée*, can trace back her lineage to King George II. of England, through the marriage of her grandfather, Jerome Bonaparte, with a Princess of Wurtemberg. The one difficulty here is, that the Duke tried on a strange crown once before, and did not like the fit; so, instead of sending the British regalia a-begging, perhaps the best plan of this nation would be to feather the nests of its home-made Royals still more and more, lest they should take to themselves wings and fly away.

THE marriage of a Princess is always a delightful topic of conversation to the feminine portion of the community where she resides; but a Princess who is going to wed her own uncle is an affair that has a piquancy of vicious scandal about it that is quite irresistible and doubles the pleasure of discussing the embroideries and laces, the silks and velvets, and glorified *chiffons* generally, that go to make up the trousseau! The gowned old women of the other sex who preside over the municipality, or, in other words the conscript fathers of Turin, are not behindhand in these discussions, but have given orders for a suitable wedding gift to be prepared. It is to be a costly casket, designed and executed by native artists.

"SURPRISE PARTIES," says *Modern Society*, have quite superseded "surprise packets," and the latest "surprise" was the marriage of the Duke of Marlborough to Mrs. Lillian Warren Hamersley, *née* Price, and it is to be hoped that his Grace has at last found the pearl of great "Price." We say surprise, as not one of the family was aware of the event taking place. However, one need never be surprised at anything that a Churchill may do, but this marriage of the divorced Duke has gone far to create a sensation among his friends in London, and came quite as unexpected news to Lord Randolph, for the Duke assured his family and friends most seriously, when last in town, that there was absolutely no truth in any rumours as regards these oft-spoken-of nuptials.

THE Duc d'Anmale has shown that a descendant of Louis Philippe can actually give, and give right royally, as well as take; and the fact of his having done so would add to his nephew's credentials, as pretender to a throne. The Comte should make believe to be highly delighted that so much property has been made over to that beloved country which he aspires to rule. Madame la Comtesse makes a surprising picture in one of her latest photographs, an English one. Her flat fringe is disposed in gladiator style, and the rest of her hair is twisted so closely that you might think she had cut it short. Her attire conveys the impression that she had borrowed her husband's coat, collar, scarf, and pin, and worn them as a joke.

BALMORAL will be unusually gay during the autumn. A succession of Royal visitors will journey to the northern palace and enjoy Her Majesty's hospitality.

STATISTICS.

IMPORTS OF DAIRY PRODUCTS.—During April we imported 169,470 cwt. of butter against 131,863 cwt. for the same month of last year, the above total including 21,256 cwt. from Sweden, against 13,518 cwt., 69,160 cwt. from Denmark against 43,864 cwt., 25,081 cwt. from Germany against 17,962 cwt., 15,708 cwt. from Holland against 19,562 cwt., and 22,080 cwt. from France against 31,659 cwt. The quantity of margarine received from Holland alone during the month was 83,707 cwt. against 89,226 cwt., the total imports of that article being 91,200 cwt. against 96,542 cwt. The imports of cheese for the month comprised 23,389 cwt. from Holland as compared with 27,405 cwt., 32,347 cwt. from the Atlantic ports of the United States against 26,624 cwt., and 5,754 cwt. from New Zealand against 94 cwt., the total being 66,307 cwt. against 59,882 cwt. The number of eggs imported during April reckoned, as usual, in great hundreds, came to 968,916 against 811,658, the following figures, representing great hundreds, showing our main sources of supply for the month and the corresponding part of last year:—Germany, 394,931 against 207,380; France, 348,617 against 388,852; Belgium, 173,954 against 139,243; and Denmark, 42,924 against 66,329.

GEMS.

WIT is brushwood; judgment is timber. The one gives the greatest flame; the other yields the most durable heat; and both together make the best fire.

"LOOK," said Lord Chesterfield, "in the face of the person to whom you are speaking, if you wish to know his real sentiments, for he can command his words more easily than his countenance."

THE study of literature nourishes youth, entertains old age, adorns prosperity, solaces adversity, is delightful at home, unobtrusive abroad, deserts us not by day nor by night, in journeying nor in retirement.

A MAN who possesses every other title to our respect except that of courtesy is in danger of forgetting them all. A rude manner renders its owner always liable to affront. He is never without dignity who avoids wounding the dignity of others.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SNOWFLAKE CAKES.—Half a cup each of butter and lard, two cups powdered sugar, one cup milk, whites of five eggs, and three cups flour, flavour with vanilla, and bake in small tins.

COCONUT MACAROONS.—Take equal parts of desiccated cocoanut and powdered sugar, and mix with the beaten whites of two eggs until they form a thick paste; bake on buttered paper until a pale brown colour.

COCONUT BREAD PUDDING.—One cupful of bread crumbs, two eggs, one-half cupful of desiccated cocoanut, one pint of milk, five tablespoonfuls of sugar; after the pudding has become hot in the oven add a tablespoonful of butter; serve with cream or rich milk flavoured.

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE.—One-half pound sugar, one-quarter pound butter, five beaten eggs, two tablespoonfuls of milk, one-half pound of flour, one teaspoonful baking powder. Bake in a square pan, and while hot cut through with a sharp knife, and place sugared berries between. Serve with cream. This receipt makes a very nice jelly roll.

STEWED KIDNEYS.—Trim away the fat, skin and cut each kidney into thin slices, put the slices in a stewpan, dredging them first with flour; then put in two ounces of butter, salt and pepper; let them stew ten minutes; then add two glasses of claret and the juice of a lemon. In ten minutes the kidneys may be served in its sauce with chopped parsley.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE metric system is now the only legal system of weights and measures for about four hundred and ten millions of people—the only prominent exceptions to its general use being in Russia, the United States, and Great Britain; in the last two of which indeed its use is authorized, although not generally adopted.

WIND ROLLED snowballs are often noticed on the prairies in Dakota and Wyoming, U.S.A. The force of the storm rounds the masses of snow as neatly as an industrious schoolboy, and frequently millions of these natural snowballs may be seen whirling about, some the size of an orange, others like a cannonball, and some as big as a prize pumpkin.

A CURIOUS Oriental manner of determining land tenure relates to small pieces of State lands situated between the boundaries of villages in Asia Minor. One of the villagers, standing upon the steps of a mosque, calls out at the top of his voice, the point beyond which his voice cannot be heard being the limit of the village property. At the neighbouring village the same performance is gone through, and the land between belongs to the State.

A BINDING CUSTOM.—The women of the better classes of India never show their faces. It is true, says a recent writer, that some travellers speak of their peeping from behind their latticed windows. But from what I have seen and can learn from people who have long lived here, such coquetries are only indulged in by Nautch girls (dancing girls) of a low order, or by a still worse class. The education of a woman is such that she honestly thinks herself degraded should she permit her face to be seen by a man; rarely is it done, even to a father-in-law or a brother-in-law, especially if the brother-in-law be older than her husband. A well-to-do Hindoo, with six brothers, who were all younger than himself, told me he had seldom ever seen the face of a single one of his sisters-in-law, and when he had done so it was under peculiar circumstances religiously permissible. This thing is not simply a social custom, but it is mixed up with their religious requirements. Religion has a very powerful hold even on the men, who are generally more or less educated, for now common schools prevail throughout the country. But the women are uneducated except in religious rites and duties. With them their religion is all despotic and powerful, leading them in the past to the burning funeral pyres of their dead husbands.

THE EARTH TO DIE FROM OLD AGE.—The age of the earth is placed by some at five hundred million years, and still others of late time, among them the Duke of Argyll, place it at ten million years, knowing what processes it has gone through. Other planets go through the same process. The reason that other planets differ so much from the earth is that they are in a much earlier or later stage of existence. The earth must become old. Newton surmised, although he could give no reason for it, that the earth would at one time lose all its water and become dry. Since then it has been found that Newton was correct. As the earth keeps cooling it will become porous, and cavities will be formed in the interior, which will take in the water. It is estimated that the water diminishes at the rate of about the thickness of a sheet of writing paper each year. At this rate, in six million years the water will have sunk a mile, and in fifteen million years the water will have disappeared from the face of the globe. The nitrogen and oxygen in the atmosphere are diminishing all the time. It is in an inappreciable degree, but the time will come when the air will be so thin that no creature we know can breathe and live; the time will come when the world cannot support life. That will be the period of old age, and then will come death.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. P.—To make the sauce required in large quantities, mix together two gallons of mushroom catsup, two gallons of walnut catsup, one gallon of soy, one pound of garlic, and six pounds of sprats. Boil for fifteen minutes, strain and bottle.

M. D.—London contains about 1,200 places of worship, 590 of which belong to the Church of England, 190 to the Wesleyans and Methodists, 120 to the Independents, 140 to the Baptists, 50 to the Roman Catholics, and about 200 to other denominations.

G. D.—The title of Highness was given to Henry VII.; and this, and sometimes Your Grace, was the manner of addressing Henry VIII.; but about the close of the reign of the last mentioned king, the title of Highness or Your Grace was absorbed in that of Majesty.

B. S.—We decline giving any advice. The subject is too delicate for the interference of a stranger, however well intentioned. Consult your nearest relative, or, if it comes to the worst, your lawyer. You are to be pitied, and we sympathize in your distress, though we cannot offer any opinion.

L. D.—1. The panorama was the invention of Robert Barker. In 1788 he exhibited at Edinburgh a view of that city, it being the first picture of the kind. He then commenced similar exhibitions in London, and was ultimately enabled to build commodious premises in Leicester Square. He died in 1806. 2. Bayard's Panorama of the Mississippi was completed about 1846. It was without precedent in dimensions.

B. L.—The name of "Merry Andrew" was first given to a droll and eccentric physician, whose name was Andrew Borde, who lived in the reign of Henry VIII., and who, on some occasions, on account of his facetious manners and good humour, appeared at court in 1547. He used to attend markets and fairs, and harangue the people. The name is now used for buffoon, or one who makes sport for others; especially, in England, one who attends a mountebank or quack doctor.

A. D.—Although you like the young gentlemen pretty well, you are clearly not at all in love with them, as we judge from your consulting us on the subject of kissing; so, under the circumstances, we advise you to keep your kisses for some young man whom you will like still better. Your two friends will not think any the less of you on account of your reticence, whatever they say. Flowers, books and such trifles are more appropriate presents between young people of opposite sexes than jewellery.

J. N.—1. Velvet skirts are made with the nap running up. 2. Nothing can be done to remedy silk that wears glossy. This is the result of glycerine having been used in the making of the silk. The glycerine comes out. You might try sponging off the glossy parts with lukewarm borax and water, using a piece of the goods. 3. Watch-pockets are put upon the outside of basques, instead of being set in, as formerly. 4. A crimson plush undershirt with a pale pink satin overdress would make you an elegant ball dress.

L. D.—"Bear and forbear" is all well enough, but it argues a kind of negative character where it entails a ceaseless submission to others' caprices or tyranny. A proper self-assertion is equally a right and a duty where your privileges are abridged and your methods questioned. Since you have succeeded in discovering that the motive of the tyranny is selfish and sordid you certainly will be "justified" in resenting it. If the business is to your taste, and there is profit in it, better pursue it without a partner and thus be independent.

LEDA.—Pocahontas did not marry Capt. John Smith, whose life she saved. She was wedded to an Englishman named John Rolfe. Before her marriage she was baptized, receiving the name of Rebecca. When Smith visited her in London, after saluting him, she turned away her face and hid it in her hands, and remained in this position for several hours. She had been taught to believe that Smith was dead. Her husband was a party to the deception, he thinking that she would never marry him while Smith was living. She left one son, Thomas Rolfe, who became in Virginia a person of distinction.

G. L. V.—There was such a person as Eugene Aram. He was born in England in 1704. He enjoyed a remarkable reputation for extensive scholarship, acquired under the greatest difficulties, his family being very poor. While serving as a schoolmaster he became implicated in a robbery committed by a man named Daniel Clarke, but was discharged for lack of evidence. He went immediately to London, and Clarke disappeared mysteriously at the same time. Twenty-five years afterwards Aram was arrested and tried for the murder of Clarke. He was convicted and hanged. After his conviction he confessed his guilt, and attempted suicide, but was discovered in time to frustrate his purpose.

J. J. L.—A flirt—or, more correctly, a coquette, for the term flirt is still abused—is a woman who deliberately tries to win men's love for the express purpose of rejecting it and triumphing over her victims. You may receive attentions and favours from a dozen gentlemen without being a flirt; and it is arrant nonsense to say that a girl should receive attentions from no gentleman unless she expects to marry him, or to suppose that every man who acts the gallant to a young lady is going to ask her to marry him. A lady may receive attentions from many gentlemen and treat them all with such equal consideration that not one can deem himself preferred above the others. But when she does distinguish one with her favour, and so virtually says to her friends, this is the man of them all I love, she should be very sure of her own heart.

SOPHIE.—To restrain excessive perspiration use the following: Water, 2 ounces; diluted sulphuric acid, 40 drops; compound spirit of lavender, 2 drachms, take a tablespoonful twice a day.

N. E.—In calling upon a person living in an hotel, it is customary to stop in the visitors' room and send your card to their rooms. Among very intimate friends this formality is generally dispensed with.

M. P.—Flowers, seed, bees and poultry have all proved profitable in the right hands; but there is no pleasant occupation which can be taken up by every middle-aged woman with a fair prospect of success.

C. H. H.—It would be impossible to explain, through the medium of these columns, the manner in which the music described should be played. No one but an experienced teacher could impart such information.

W. G.—The mistletoe, when duly cut by the priests, was considered by the ancient Britons to be a charm against disease and misfortune; in modern times it has been used medicinally, but its only interest now is in connection with the custom of "kissing under the mistletoe."

C. R.—In Genesis it is said that the world was created in six days. Many have tried to identify the geological periods with the days of creation, but although very plausible schemes can be constructed, there is no agreement among the authorities as to what periods corresponded with each day. It is uncertain at what period birds first appeared. Some geologists think that footmarks found in triassic formations are those of birds, but the earliest undoubted remains of birds have been found only in the rocks of the chalk period.

THE LOVERS' WALK.

WHEN we went out "a Maying"
In the mild month of the year,
I heard a soft voice saying,
What no one else should hear:
"We have been long delaying
Our wedding day, my dear."

I felt the blush receding,
And coming back again.
I tried to seem unheeding,
But wore the mask in vain;
For he was gently leading
Me through the lovers' lane.

And nature all around me
Repeated what he said;
And there upon the ground he
Pointed to blossoms red,
Whose language did confound me—
"Twas 'Now's the time to wed.'"

Even the birds were singing,
So it did seem to me,
Of love; and there came winging
From the greenwood a dove.
The message it was bringing
I said was from above.

The sylvan brooklet flowing
Joined love's conspiracy—
With balmy winds soft blowing,
Whispering of love to me;
And my flushed face was showing
The heart's deep mystery.

Now we go out together,
When the broad skies are fair;
His presence, like good weather,
Is welcome everywhere.
Like two birds of "a feather,"
We are a happy pair.

G. W. B.

A. D. D.—Should you find an agreeable person in private society, who seems desirous of making your acquaintance, there is no objection to your meeting his advances half-way, although a formal introduction may not have taken place. His presence in your friend's house should be a sufficient guarantee for his respectability, as otherwise he would not be there.

C. S.—1. A gentleman is not bound to dance the first set after supper with the lady whom he takes into supper, but in some circles it is usual to do so. 2. A lady may use her discretion about asking her escort to come in. If, on account of the lateness of the hour or any other cause, she does not wish a visit just then, she may dismiss her escort, with a politely expressed wish to see him soon. 3. There is no rule applicable to all cases. A lady should endeavour to make her visitors understand that their calls are welcome and agreeable.

T. T.—1. The engagement ring is worn on the third finger—that is, the finger next the little finger—of the right hand. 2. The wedding ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand. 3. Among the Hebrews the wedding ring was formerly worn on the first finger, but now even they have conformed to the general usage. 4. The question of giving engagement and wedding rings is so old that its origin cannot now be certainly determined. One account is that in making any bargain it was usual to give something as a pledge and token, and as nothing could be more easily carried about, or more securely kept than a ring, this became the token always given to bind the important engagement of marriage. Another explanation is, that as the man in marrying the woman made her the mistress of his house, he handed her his ring, which in early times was used as a signet, in place of writing the name, and so denoted the trust and confidence he reposed in his bride.

N. S.—You did very wrong in marrying without telling just how you stood financially, and you make a mistake in not taking your wife into your confidence in your business enterprise. All you can do now is to work hard and energetically, and to be as good a husband as possible.

W. C. W.—We have heard of such an invention as a carriage-wheel made from saw-dust. It consists of an iron rim seven inches in diameter by half an inch thick, fitted with a well-proportioned hub, the space between being filled with pine saw-dust, pressed in so compactly that it is said a pressure of twenty-three tons applied to the hub failed to develop the least sign of weakness.

P. D.—Common sense must regulate all such points. When you call for a lady to take her out driving, it is your part, of course, to ask her when she wishes to start, if she leaves the matter for you to decide. Ordinarily the lady would put on her bonnet or hat, and "wrap" when your arrival is announced, and come down stairs ready to go out. If the lady wishes to talk a little before starting, she may ask to take your hat, if that is a customary attention to ordinary visitors in her circle.

J. M. W.—1. Henry VIII. had six wives, viz. Catharine of Aragon, Anna Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catharine Howard and Catharine Parr, who survived him. His first and fourth wives were divorced from him, Jane Seymour died a natural death, and Anna Boleyn and Catharine Howard were beheaded. 2. We do not know of any person or persons from whom you could obtain "ready-made" essays or orations. It would be advisable to write such articles yourself, and not depend upon the productions of other people's brains.

G. F. M.—So many little children are given to the habit of mentioning that some mothers regard it as a kind of matter-of-course and do not treat it with severity of punishment, but you being only an elder sister must needs rule rather by love and moral sanction than by force. It is a pitiful thing to do, to beat a little one's tender hand with a ruler. Try never to have occasion for it, but rather punish by showing your sorrow, your displeasure, your surprise, and prompt the children to candour, truth and submission by applauding and encouraging them.

F. D. S.—Perhaps the young lady is more prudent than you are, and thinks that she had better wait a little longer, before deciding to engage herself to any one. In this case you will be wise to take her sister's advice. Without giving her up to see other friends, work hard, cultivate your mind, and then if in a few years, when you are both old enough to know your own minds, she accepts you, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that she and you are acting on deliberate judgment, and have a better chance of happiness than if you had been engaged at seventeen.

W. V.—Since you have chosen your profession and have been successful in it, it is very doubtful if you could wholly abandon it. Consequently, if you wish to visit your parents, it would be advisable to first inform them of your intentions, and so open a way to their good wishes. Then if they receive you, explain the whole matter in detail, and show them that it is a perfectly honourable manner of gaining a livelihood, and peculiarly adapted to your tastes. Doubtless they will be won over to your way of thinking, and matters will be satisfactorily adjusted in this manner.

W. F.—Such matters depend on the relations of the parties and the wishes of the young lady. In either of the cases mentioned, if the gentleman is on visiting terms with her family, and if she wishes him to call again, it would be proper for her to invite him to do so. Or if she thought that politeness required her to extend that favour to him, she would be at liberty to do so. When a gentleman accompanies a lady home at a late hour, it is not customary for her to invite him in; and if she does so, it is understood to be a mere matter of form, and the gentleman politely declines to accept the invitation.

R. C.—The gentleman referred to seems only to be gratifying a selfish desire on his part to win your admiration, forgetting that in so doing he prevents you from making an acceptable match with some one who would be more expeditious in wooing you. Doubtless you have shown him too plainly that you love him, and on that account he does not appreciate it. You should be more circumspect in your actions, and let him understand that your feelings cannot be trampled upon in such a manner. If he intends to marry you, it should be so stated, and then you will know how to act towards him. Do not allow any undue freedom on his part until such time as he shall be entitled thereto.

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